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ABSTRACT

This study examined teachers' and parents' perceptions of pedagogical successes in, and problems with, the implementation of mixed-age classes in primary education. Questionnaires were completed by 44 teachers in 2 British Columbia school districts, and by 41 parents of children in mixed-age classes in those districts. Some of the teachers were teaching mixed-age classes. Both teachers and parents more frequently reported benefits than concerns for children in mixed-age classes. Teachers showed a general understanding of the philosophy supporting mixed-age grouping, but were less clear about the ways in which mixed-age grouping supports peer tutoring, and about the benefits of mixed-age grouping for the older children in a class. Teachers identified mathematics as the curriculum area most difficult to cover in mixed-age classes. The most frequently reported source of teachers' learning about mixed-age grouping was practical experience, and they also most frequently reported a knowledge of child development as an important quality for a teacher in a mixed-age class. A reference list of 42 items is provided. Appendixes include copies of the teacher and parent surveys, tables of data compiled from responses to the surveys, and anecdotal comments excerpted from the survey responses. (BC)

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MIXED-AGE GROUPING IN NONGRADED PRIMARY CLASSES

BY

JUDY GUTHRIE PASEMKO

B.G.S., Simon Fraser University, 1987

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

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THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Centre For the Study of Curriculum and Instruction
(Early Childhood Education)

We accept this thesis as conforming

to the required standard

.....

.....Marilyn Chapman.....

.....

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

November 1992

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to examine the pedagogical successes and problems in implementation of primary mixed-age classes. A survey of 44 primary teachers and 41 parents was conducted in two school districts. The results revealed that involvement of the majority of the staff and the setting of goals facilitated implementation. Teachers and parents reported many more benefits than concerns for children in mixed-age classes. While the teachers generally understood the philosophy supporting mixed-age grouping, two areas less well understood were peer tutoring and the benefits of mixed-aged grouping for older children. Math was identified as the curriculum area most difficult to implement in mixed-age classes. The study identified a need for a deeper understanding of child development theory and how it relates to teaching practise. Teachers identified collaboration with colleagues and school visitations as the most popular ways for learning about mixed-age. The responses of teachers and parents were similar, both identified social and cognitive benefits for the children enrolled in mixed-age classes.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine teachers' and parents' perceptions of pedagogical successes and problems in implementing primary mixed-age classes. This study attempts to access information that will identify: (a) the successes, the problems and the needs that Primary School staffs experience when restructuring to primary mixed-age classes, (b) the advantages and disadvantages of teaching primary mixed-age classes, (c) the benefits and concerns for children enrolled in mixed-age classes, and (d) parents' understandings of mixed-age grouping.

1.2 Background

The British Columbia Report on the Royal Commission on Education, A Legacy for Learners (1989), proposed major changes to education and curricula in British Columbia. Subsequent directions as outlined by the position statements in the Primary Program Foundation Document (1990) have led educators to rethink old paradigms. Previous concepts of a homogeneously aged, graded organization has been replaced with the adoption of a continuous progress nongraded organization. Fundamental changes in classroom structures are evidenced in the move to mixed-age classes. As educators begin implementing the concepts of continuous progress and nongradedness there is an increasing movement towards mixed-age organizations.

The British Columbia Ministry of Education (1990a) identifies mixed-age groupings as developmentally appropriate early childhood settings which support the philosophy of a continuous progress nongraded model of education. The Ministry describes mixed-age settings as those which enroll children who have spent a differing number of years in the primary program and have participated in classes labelled as "dual-year" and "multi-year". The first to fourth year designations correspond to what was formerly Kindergarten to Grade Three. Dual-year classes include arrangements of children in first and second year, second and third year, or third and fourth year of the primary program. Multi-year classes include children in first, second, and third year; second, third, and fourth year; and first, second, third, and fourth year of the primary program.

Mixed-age grouping, also known as multi-age, multi-grade, multi-year, and family grouping is defined by L. G. Katz (personal communication, August 13, 1992) as "classes in which the age range is greater than one year and which are expressly intended to maximize the educative potential of the heterogeneity therein rather than to solve administrative problems." Katz's definition distinguishes mixed-age classes from split classes which traditionally have been formed for administrative purposes having to do with numbers of children, not from philosophy.

The terms, "multi-age", "nongraded", and "continuous progress" are often used synonymously and it must be clarified that they are not the same. A mixed-age class as defined by Katz is a physical arrangement of children of

different ages grouped together with the philosophical belief that there are benefits from such configurations. Nongraded, on the other hand, is an organization based on the underlying belief that learning should be continuous and based on the needs of the learners. "A nongraded organization implies that learning begins where the child is and moves forward as the child is able" (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1990b, p.24). Lastly, continuous progress is defined by the British Columbia Primary Teacher's Association (1989) as occurring "when a learner progresses according to his/her academic, social, emotional, physical and aesthetic development regardless of age or number of years in school" (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1990, p.24).

Mixed-age classes are not a new idea since such classes have existed in a few schools in British Columbia for over 20 years. However, for the majority of teachers in B.C., mixed-age grouping has meant "split-grade" classes. There is a major difference between split-grade classes and mixed-age classes.

In British Columbia split-grade classes enrolled children in different grades and separate bodies of curriculum were taught to each grade enrolled in the class. Teachers had to deal with two or three separate curricula. Children were taught from a curriculum appropriate for the grade in which they were enrolled, which was not necessarily appropriate for their individual learning needs. While children were exposed to the next grade's material, this occurred incidentally and only rarely were children allowed to work on the curriculum for the next grade.

Split-grade classes were unpopular with teachers because they felt that they had to perform a juggling act between the different curricula and the different ability levels within each grade. Parents disliked split-grade classes because they felt their children did not receive the instructional time they would have received in a straight grade.

Mixed-age classes based on a continuous progress nongraded model do not deal with separate bodies (grades) of curricula, but offer an integrated curriculum. The integrated curriculum of the Primary Program is not content-bound as was the previous graded system. An integrated curriculum links traditional subject areas and offers children learning in a holistic meaningful manner. The important thrust of integrated learning for young children is that the curriculum not only crosses content areas, but that all learning is integrated within the context of each child's experience and as such connects children's lives to their learning experiences in school settings.

There is a fundamental shift in the philosophy and pedagogy supporting British Columbia's move from a graded to a nongraded model of education. The graded system was based on a predetermined body of curriculum that all children of a specific age were expected to learn in ten month segments of time. If children did not succeed in completing the content in the prescribed time they failed and had to repeat the grade, starting the next year, not from where they might be in a continuum of learning, but from the beginning of the grade.

Nongraded, on the other hand, does not have a predetermined body of curriculum that children must learn in a specified length of time, but rather, a curriculum that acknowledges that learning happens over a continuum of time and encompasses development that is appropriate for "the age span of the children within the group and is implemented with attention to the different needs, interests, and developmental levels of individual children" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 3). A nongraded curriculum recognizes the developmental differences between children as well as developmental differences within individual children. It offers curricula appropriate to the developmental needs of the age span across a group of children as well as needs of individual children within the group and as such in nongraded models children do not fail, learning is individual and continuous.

Mixed-age grouping has been identified as a potentially successful organization for supporting the tenets of a nongraded continuous progress philosophy and in British Columbia pilot programs in mixed-age grouping began in the 1989/90 school year, followed by an increasing number of classes and in some cases entire schools adopting mixed-age organizations each year since. While it is a relatively simple matter to rearrange children so that each classroom has a mix of ages, there are other complex considerations that need to be understood from such a restructuring. One consideration is the teachers' and parents' understandings of the philosophy supporting mixed-age and another is how the restructuring will take place. The focus of this study

attempts to gain an understanding of the pedagogical successes and problems in restructuring to mixed-age classes.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

As British Columbia's educators move towards implementation of mixed-age groupings there is a widening interest in the literature on mixed-age grouping. A review of the literature on mixed-age grouping in early childhood education settings will determine if the findings of well designed research support the educational theory and the judgements of the teachers and observers of mixed-age groupings. The literature reviewed in this paper will be addressed in Chapter Two and Three. Chapter Two reviews the literature on the practical bases for mixed-age grouping. Chapter Three reviews the literature on theoretical and research bases of mixed-age grouping.

2.1 Practical Bases For Mixed-Age Grouping

The body of literature written by educators with practical experience in mixed-age classrooms is very small. The teachers and observers of mixed-age classes who have recorded their experiences offer positive and satisfying results for both teachers and children. Of the educators who have turned to a mixed-age model, many have done so in order to allow for children's individual differences.

As part of the Council For Cultural Cooperation, the Fajan School in Sweden is one of twelve schools in twelve different countries adopting mixed-age grouping. Papadopoulous (1988) reports that Fajan's is a single stream elementary school with an integrated nursery and daycare. The 220

pupils in the school range from nine months to twelve years. The school has no grading according to age or ability. However, each unit is color coded and includes a nursery department, a junior class, and an intermediate class. The policy is to create close contact between nursery and primary children and to maintain the same groups of nursery children on their admittance to primary school which is organized into mixed-age classes consisting of three grades. Each year ten children move on, making room for ten younger children. Papadopoulous reports that the school is created so that people, not regulations, are at the core and where the needs and development of the children are of paramount importance. The result he reports are enthusiastic, happy responsible children.

Papadopoulous reports that in the cognitive domain, in the areas of math, science, and socials curriculum, children are encouraged to plan and implement their own learning. While the children are allowed to proceed at their own pace, there is a need to strengthen and structure activities for certain things children should learn at proper stages of development. He states that this does not mean moving back to rote memorization, but that adequate guidance needs to be given by teachers and that certain structured activities are necessary when pursuing objectives in the cognitive domain. Papadopoulous implies that teachers working in an ungraded system need to have an understanding of child development as well as the developmental stages in learning. He does not discuss his implication that there are optimum stages of development for specific learning objectives.

Cushman's (1990) article describes three different mixed-age classes she has observed. At the center of each program is a philosophy based on the developmental learning theories of Piaget and Bruner. Classrooms incorporating the ideas of Piaget and Bruner would include hands on experiences where children are encouraged to interact and learn from each other. Piaget (1974) believed children needed concrete materials and actual experience to reconstruct or rediscover that which needed to be learned. Bruner believed that learning takes place in social contexts and social interaction is necessary for children to learn.

Cushman described classrooms in which children were allowed to develop at their own rate of learning, always moving from the concrete to the abstract. She states that a mixed-age model expects diversity rather than uniformity among children and thus alleviated many of the problems associated with graded classes, especially the policy of retention and an early sense of failure that many children have been made to experience. Children in these classes were allowed to progress at their own pace. She also observed the effectiveness of cooperative learning and peer tutoring. Children's social skills grew in the mixed age classes as students developed attitudes of responsibility and tolerance for the differences found in their classmates. Cushman also reported that deep personal bonds form between teacher and student in classes that stayed together for more than one year and that the bonding helped diminish academic and discipline problems.

Connell (1987) turned to family grouping in reaction against a graded system of education that expected uniform progress for all children. She was dissatisfied with a system that assumes that if children do not progress satisfactorily, it is the children who have failed rather than the system that has failed to meet children's needs. The mixed-age classes she and her colleagues taught were designed to group children in a fashion more consistent with a philosophy that works towards enhancing each child's self-image. The curriculum was developed around the needs of the children. Connell (1987) reports that with these two changes the end-of-year achievement scores went from one of the lowest of twenty-four schools to the highest. Connell does not describe how children's self images were enhanced, or how the curriculum met the children's needs, or what effect mixed-age grouping played in her design. She does describe the atmoshpere of the classes as one of cooperation not competition.

In dealing with the problem of how to integrate four year olds into existing school programs that would offer the highest quality educational experience, Doud and Finkelstein (1985) looked at a laboratory school that offered a mixed-age program which grouped four and five year olds. The program was built on the philosophical belief that the greater the differences among children, the richer the learning experience. The advantages they found with mixed-age grouping include, children are unique individuals rather than "four year olds" or "kindergarteners"; a wider range of individual differences in mental, social, physical, and emotional development is provided for; an

opportunity for immature five year olds to interact with mature four year olds; no stigma of retention; facilitates children who are ready to progress and allows teachers to work with the same children for two years, which also allows the teacher more time to identify children's learning styles and needs and to plan accordingly. They explain that addressing diversity and individual needs "should not be confused with attempting to plan an individualized program for each child, but rather to get to know the children well enough as individuals to be able to provide learning experiences geared to their particular levels of development" (p. 19). Doud and Finkelstein's explanation of how mixed-age grouping addresses diversity and individual needs should alleviate the educational concern that in order to meet individual needs a teacher must design twenty plus "individual" programs.

Oberlander (1989) attributes the success of her mixed-age program for five to eight year olds to a developmentally appropriate environment for young children without rejection or separation from their peers. Children progress at their own pace in a program designed to their needs and achievement. The program includes hands-on experiences, cooperative learning, peer tutoring and an integrated approach to learning.

Forester and Reinhard (1989), in recognizing the broad range of experience and developmental stages of children on entry to school, support mixed-age grouping because it fosters continuous progress, which allows children the opportunity to move ahead in areas of strength, while taking extra time for difficult topics. They believe that the mix of ages and levels of

learning within the classroom becomes the stimulus for greater independence of learning, for peer modelling and for good social integration of children of different ages. They stress that a spirit of cooperation is essential and that establishing a positive climate for learning is crucial to making family grouping successful. Some of the benefits Forester and Reinhard identify are: teaching the child, not the curriculum; encouraging the integration of curriculum; children initiating much of their own learning; providing a natural environment for cooperation and peer tutoring; developing consideration of children for each other; facilitating emergence of skills "naturally" and in the children's time-frame.

From Buston's (1978) experience family grouping does not offer a more efficient delineation of intellectual progress, but it does allow for working together for longer periods of time without the constraints of uniform growth and lock step curriculum. It allows children to progress at their own pace. Teachers are not the only authority in the classroom; children are encouraged to learn from each other. The desire to learn comes from the children instigating much of their own learning in an atmosphere where they experience self-worth as individuals and build personal status by being responsible leaders.

Firlik (1976) describes his experience in England with a class of eight to eleven year olds. He found that mixed-age grouping forced him to consider the children's mental and social development rather than their chronological ages, it also helped him break away from grade expectations. He found it motivated the children to be more responsible for their own learning and to be more

responsive to others. It initiated a more cooperative environment by promoting friendships between children of different ages, abilities, aptitudes, and interests. A further advantage was that a child's position in the class changed from year to year. As an older group moved on and was replaced by a younger group a child's status of smallest or youngest changed each year.

A recurring theme in the literature on mixed-age grouping is the need for an organization and a curriculum that allows children's learning to progress at their own pace without fear of failure. These educators have found mixed-age grouping to be supportive of the need to teach children, not the curriculum and, in so doing, cite many examples of the social benefits of a continuous progress mixed-age model of educating young children.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

3.1 Theoretical and Research Bases For Mixed-age Grouping

There is a small but growing body of literature that suggests children benefit cognitively and socially from mixed-age learning. Several books and articles describe the theoretical advantages of mixed-age grouping.

Goodlad & Anderson (1987), and Cuban (1989) express their belief that mixed-age classes support a nongraded educational philosophy. Goodlad and Anderson (1987) state that the most important reason for reorganizing to a nongraded structure is the failure of the traditional "graded" system. The authors state that the realities of child development defy conventional graded structures and in the average first grade there can be as much as a four year spread in mental age. As well as developmental differences between children, there are developmental differences within children. Progress in all areas of a child's development is not even; children can have differences between reading attainment and arithmetic attainment, between physical development and emotional development.

However, in a traditional structure, "the work of a grade, a year of progress, and a chronological year in a child's life are seen as roughly comparable for school purposes" (Goodlad & Anderson, p.2). Promotion and retention policies measure a year's progress and failure is the consequence for many children who do not develop along the rigid structures set up by graded policies. The inadequacies of promotion and retention policies to achieve

academic progress compounded by the emotional difficulties suffered by young children subjected to school failure are well documented (Charlesworth, 1989; Doyle, 1989; Goodlad & Anderson 1987; Smith & Shephard, 1987). It is in reaction against the failure of the graded system to meet the needs of children that these theorists are looking to a nongraded philosophy and finding that a mixed-age organization shows potential to best support this restructuring.

Elkind (1987) believes that the rigid age structures that dominate schools are based on physical time, whereas children grow on biological and psychological time. He describes biological and psychological times as variable and physical time as uniform. Children's growth within physical time is uneven, therefore age grouping based on physical time denies children's biological and psychological growth because it expects uniform performance. It is the uniformity and impulse to standardize student achievement and student behavior in graded schools that Cuban (1989) finds so damaging to many students, especially at-risk socially disadvantaged children. "The implicit theory underlying the graded school is that educational quality comes through uniformity" (p.782). Cuban and Elkind see mixed-age groupings as being able to accommodate the developmental differences found in children. Elkind sees mixed-age grouping as flexible enough to accommodate children at different levels of maturity as well as children with differing levels of intelligence?

Thus far, the educational theory supporting mixed-age grouping points out that it is not mixed-age grouping alone (the physical arrangement of children of mixed ages grouped together) that the theorists espouse, but

mixed-age grouping as a vehicle to support developmentally appropriate educational practice as embodied in a continuous progress nongraded philosophy. Goodlad and Anderson (1987) describe the most desirable classroom organization as one in which both the nongraded concept and the mixed-age grouping concept are central.

While it is difficult to disagree with theorists who identify a need for developmentally appropriate curriculum and who offer an organization that allows for a curriculum based on the needs children, the theorists assume that all educators have a common understanding on just what a developmentally appropriate curriculum is. In reality not all primary teachers in British Columbia have backgrounds in child development that includes the ages of five through eight. Nor do they have training in how this development relates to children's learning. As Cuban (1989) says, "abolishing grades and changing nothing else would be simple simple-minded folly" (p.799) and the same must be said for the move to mixed-age grouping. Teaching a nongraded class with mixed-age grouping requires more than just having children of different ages in a classroom. It requires a fundamental understanding of how this organization is advantageous to children's development and learning.

Elkind (1987) believes another advantage of mixed-age grouping is that children will benefit by first being the youngest and then the oldest in the group. The British model of mixed-age grouping known as family or vertical grouping involves children of mixed-ages staying with a teacher for more than one year (Stanton, 1973). It is widely believed that staying with the same

teacher for more than one year offers primary children stable and secure attachments and provides teachers with enough time to make informed assessments of individual children's learning styles and educational needs. The time children stay in a family grouping varies with different models. In Britain, children normally stay with the same teacher for their "infant" (five to seven year old) schooling years (Ridgeway, 1979).

British Columbia is moving towards a model of mixed-age grouping where the oldest children in the class move on at the end of each year to make room for a new group of younger children. In this model children stay with a teacher for two years but the teacher never has the same class for more than one year. Staying with a teacher for more than one year (for the majority of children) is very positive socially and academically and is supported throughout the literature by practitioners of mixed-age grouping (Cushman, 1990; Forester & Reinhard, 1989; Elkind, 1987; Doud & Finkelstein, 1985; Ridgeway, 1979; Firlik, 1976: Stanton, 1973; Wolfson, 1967).

Several theorists believe that mixed-age grouping holds social and cognitive benefits for young children. Cooperative learning and peer tutoring are theoretical underpinnings believed to support social and cognitive growth in mixed-age grouping. Elkind (1987) believes that mixed-age grouping encourages cooperation and states that there is growing recognition that cooperation is more conducive to academic learning than competition. Elkind's belief is supported by Pratt (in Goodland & Anderson, 1987) whose study found that same-age groups create increased competition and aggression while

mixed-age groups promote harmony and nurturance. Katz, Evangelou, and Hartman (1989) explain that while cooperative learning is not directly concerned with age, it is related to the exploitation of differences between participants and as such is a rationale for their recommendation of mixed-age grouping.

As well as cooperative learning, theorists identify mixed-age grouping as ideal for peer tutoring. Peer tutoring is described by Cohen (1986) as a "one-to-one teaching process in which the tutor is of the same general academic status as the tutee" and where the main goals are academic gains for the tutee and gains in self esteem, helping and cooperative skills for the tutors. Cohen suggests that cross-age tutoring is likely to eliminate the competition that hinders same-age peer tutoring. Mixed-age grouping presents an ideal situation for peer tutoring since it provides an environment rich in diversity where children of differing ages, interests, and abilities can work together.

Roopnarine and Johnson's (1987) support for mixed-age peer tutoring is grounded in evidence that suggests the greatest gains in learning during peer tutoring occur when there is more of an age discrepancy between tutor and tutee than when peers are close in age. In tutoring situations, children prefer to teach younger children, but prefer to be taught by children older than themselves (Lougee, Grueneich, & Hartup, 1977). Learning is further facilitated by mixed-age peer tutoring because the distance between the tutors' and tutees' understanding is smaller than the distance between the understandings of students and teacher (Katz, Evangelou & Hartman, 1989). Peers are

identified as being more capable than adults in presenting subject matter in terms that a tutee can understand because the tutor is closer to the tutee's cognitive framework and uses the same peer language (Cohen, 1986).

Further theoretical support of mixed-age grouping is provided by Katz et al (1989). The authors suggest the effect of mixed-age grouping on cognition arises from Brown and Palincsar's (1986) theory of cognitive conflict and Vygotsky's (1987) zone of proximal development. Cognitive conflict is not simply a less developed learner imitating a more developed learner, but arises out of the interaction of children with different levels of cognitive maturity. This interaction leads to the internalizing of new understandings. In a mixed-age setting, cognitive conflict stimulates growth by requiring children in earlier stages of development to assimilate and accommodate new information represented by the difference in understanding between themselves and more developed children (Katz, et al).

Similar to the theory of cognitive conflict is Vygotsky's (1987) zone of proximal development. "It is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, p.86). In mixed-age groupings the age range provides an environment of more "capable peers".

As support for mixed-age grouping Katz (1988) discusses the changing family structures that have led to children spending more time in child care centers and preschools where homogeneous age placements are replacing the

natural mixed age setting of families. In family groups children are typically provided opportunities to observe, emulate and initiate a wide range of competencies (Evangelou, 1989). In age-segregated schools and daycare settings children have little access to children of other ages. Based on a review of the research and the "accumulated experience of many early childhood educators," Katz, Evangelou, and Hartman (1989) advocate mixed-age grouping in schools and child care centers on the basis that mixed-age grouping offers social and cognitive benefits to children.

The mixed-age theorists present compelling arguments in support of an educational organization that facilitates a nongraded continuous progress model of developmentally appropriate early childhood education. A model that has the characteristics of family and offers social and cognitive benefits carries many positive potentials.

3.2 Research On Mixed-age Grouping

The research on mixed-age grouping reviewed in this paper has been conducted during the past fifteen years and will be classified in two general categories: a) social effects of mixed-age grouping, and b) cognitive effects of mixed-age grouping.

3.2.1 Social Effects of Mixed-age Grouping

Researchers attempt to identify social interactions that are influenced by age relations. According to Katz, Evangelou, and Hartman (1989), children's social perceptions play a significant role in developing social competence and

are essential to a young child's knowledge of the function and purpose of the group and the roles individuals hold within them. Several researchers have examined how children of mixed ages perceive one another and how they adapt their behavior and expectations accordingly.

The purpose of French's (1984) study was to investigate children's perception of the social roles of older, younger, and same-age peers. Participants in this study included forty-three first graders (22 male and 21 female) with ages ranging from 5.10 to 7.6, and fifty-two third graders (26 male and 26 female) with ages ranging from 7.11 to 9.5. All were from a middle-class rural suburban area. The children were asked to assign role labels to photographs of same-age, younger, and older peers. Three questions were asked for each of eight roles: friendship, leadership, giving help, receiving help, giving sympathy, receiving sympathy, providing instruction, and receiving instruction. All the questions began with the stem, "Which child would you most like to...", and were completed with items such as "...be friends with?" (p.1430).

Analysis was made using planned comparisons within the Friedman model. Analysis indicated that leadership and helping roles are associated with older children; that children prefer to give sympathy to younger children; that children prefer to instruct age mates or younger children, but they prefer to be instructed by children older than themselves, and finally, that children preferred to establish friendships with children of their own age rather than with either younger or older children. The results indicate that children do have

expectations of behavioral roles associated with those who are younger, older, and the same age as themselves. That children prefer to be instructed by older children, but prefer to instruct younger children supports the theorists' positions on the use of peer tutoring and cooperative learning in mixed-age classrooms. The findings also indicate that a mixed-age classroom could provide the context for the development of the prosocial behaviors of sympathy, helping, and leadership skills for the older members of a mixed-age group.

Another study examining children's perceptions of age is Graziano's (1978) study. The purpose of the study was to determine if young children use different standards of fair play in dealing with older children than in dealing with age-mates. Ninety-six children from a suburban parochial school participated in the study. There were twenty-four first-grade boys and twenty-four first-grade girls, twenty-four third-grade girls and twenty-four third-grade boys. The subjects were presented with two groups of snapshots. First, they were shown snapshots of two same-sex children with four group compositions for each sex: (1) two same-age, same-size players; (2) two same-age, different-size; (3) two different-age, same size; (4) two different-age, different-size players; then they were shown snapshots of towers of blocks depicting three relationships between two different colored, different size vertical stacks of wooden blocks. The children were first shown a photograph of two children and then photographs of different size towers purportedly built by the children in the photos. Within each player condition, the subjects had to allocate ten chips between two players (children in photos). Results were

computed using a correlation between the number of chips subjects allocated to a player and the number of blocks on that player's tower. There was no significant main effect for either grade or age. However, there was a significant main effect for size. The mean correlation between chips allocated and blocks on the tower was significantly lower when one of the players was larger than when they were the same size, suggesting that task performance is more important in determining reward when both players are the same size than when they differ in size. Further analysis indicated this interaction was significantly lower for first graders in the mixed-age, different size condition. Thus, first graders and third graders differ when dealing with different-age, different-size children. In summary, although younger children are able to respond to subtle task performance differences when dealing with same-age peers, the relative weighting of task performance was decreased by the presence of other cues when young children deal with older, larger children.

This study pointed out that children forfeit fair play standards when dealing with older, larger children. Graziano proposes that this finding is a relation between fair-play norms and power, and suggests that young children's "experiences with the relatively straightforward contingency between power, age, size, and deservingness may provide the simpler training ground for more complex models of deservingness" (p.530). The findings of this study suggest an important dynamic to be aware of in a mixed-age situation where dominance could be affected by age and size.

Children's play is another area explored in the study of mixed-age grouping. Researchers interested in the social benefits of mixed ages grouping have used play to investigate the influence mixed-aging has on children's interactions. Lougee, Grueneich, and Hartup (1977) studied mixed-age interactions to see if children make behavioral accomodations in accordance to age mixture in a play situation. Social activity in same-age and mixed-age dyads was contrasted and it was expected that mixed-age dyads would show a mix of older and younger modes of social interaction as compared with same-age dyads. The sample consisted of fifty-four children enrolled in the Laboratory Nursery School of the University of Minnesota. Same-age younger dyads were made up of children ranging between 3.2 and 4.1 years; same-age older dyads were made up of children between 4.5 and 5.3 years; and mixed-age dyads were made up of children between 3.4 and 5.4. An experimenter introduced the children and then left them alone to play for ten to fifteen minutes on each of two days. The interactions were videotaped and subjected to several types of observational analysis. There were three stages of coding for the videotapes, with the first coding related to the amount of social interaction and according to two main categories: positive social interaction and negative social interaction. A second stage of coding focused on the nature of the verbal interaction between the children. In the third round of coding a 15-second time sampling was used to examine the children's attention to the task. Scores from each of the three codings were analyzed separately.

The expected results of the study were not realized. The mixed-age dyads did not show a mix of older and younger modes of interaction as compared to same-age dyads. While the mean length of utterance was similar for same-age and mixed-age groups, social interaction and verbal communication was least frequent in the younger same-age dyads, increased in the mixed-age group and was most frequent in the older same age dyads. The artificial setting and the choice of play material, the sand table and the building blocks, used in this study are possible reasons why the anticipated results of the study were not met. This play material does not lend itself to the kind of social interplay that would show younger and older modes of interactions or lend itself to a need for a great deal of verbal communication.

Further exploration of mixed-age grouping has led researchers to explore the social dynamics of peer tutoring and cooperative learning. Theorists supporting mixed-age grouping identify that peer tutoring and cooperative learning require children to possess certain degrees of prosocial skills such as help-giving, sharing, and turn-taking in order to facilitate social interactions in these situations. Researchers have attempted to validate these assertions.

Ludeke & Hartup (1983) conducted a study to describe the self-determined teaching behaviors of children in a peer tutoring situation. Eighty white female students participated: thirty-two were eleven years old; thirth-two were nine years old, and sixteen were seven years old. All were enrolled in two metropolitan elementary schools that subscribed to an "open" educational philosophy. There were five sets of tutor/tutee dyads with eight

dyads in each set: eleven year old tutors with eleven, nine, and seven year old tutees; nine year old tutors with nine and seven year old tutees. A board game involving a task with clear cut rules such as turn taking, use of spinner, etc., but not requiring "correct" or "incorrect" responses was the material to be taught. The tutor was taught the game using a script to standardize teaching across tutors. Each tutoring session lasted ten minutes, after which the tutee was asked the same seven questions concerning the game rules that had been asked of the tutors. The sessions were videotaped. Eleven categories of teaching behaviors and five categories of tutee behavior were coded.

Two sets of analyses were conducted on tutor behaviors. First was an analysis of teaching behavior among tutors whose tutees were either the same age as themselves or were two years younger than themselves and the second analysis was carried out for eleven year old tutors with tutees who differed in age by infant, two, and four years. Significant group differences were found in three of the eleven teaching behaviors. Rule redundancy was used more frequently with younger tutees than with same-age tutees and questions aimed at assessing the accomplishments to the tutee were used more frequently with younger tutees. Other differences that reached significance in these analyses were strategic advice, direct assistance, and praise. These teaching behaviors occurred most often with the tutees who were four years younger and usage decreased as the age of the tutee moved closer to the age of the tutor; occurring least frequently with same-age mates. Ludeke and Hartup (1983) hypothesize that elementary school children have an implicit "theory of

teaching" that assumes that younger children require more repetition when being taught a new concept and that young children require more supportive and corrective feedback. The results of Ludeke and Hartup's study parallel the knowledge that classroom teachers have understood since the days of the one room school house; older children are excellent natural teachers in mixed-age setting. The dyad situations used in a laboratory setting in this study simulate actual classroom practise thus allowing for generalization to classroom conditions.

French, Wass, Stright and Baker (1986) offer another look at prosocial development by studying leadership asymmetries in mixed-age groups. Symmetrical behavior occurs between individuals that are equal in power and status while asymetrical behavior occurs between individuals that are unequal in power and status. This study was a replication of a pilot study in which two of the researchers were involved. The sample was 285 second, fourth, and sixth grade children assigned to same-sex groups consisting of same-age triads of seven, nine, or eleven year olds or mixed-age triads of one nine year old and two seven years olds or one eleven year old and two nine year olds. Same-age and mixed-age triads were presented a task on which verbal consensus was used to demonstrate decision making and leadership. The children individually rank ordered eight pictures and were then brought together to arrive at a consensus ranking. Their discussions were videotaped and coded to assess the contributions made to the task. The results indicated that with the seven year olds in the group the nine year olds gave more organizing statements and

engaged in behaviors that promoted group effectiveness. This was demonstrated by increased organizing behaviors and opinion solicitations used by the nine year olds as compare to their behaviors in same-age group. As in the pilot study, the findings indicate that older children in mixed-age situations exhibit more organizational behavior, less opinion giving, and more opinion seeking than both younger or same-age counterparts. Ludeke and Hartup suggest that mixed-age groups may provide experience for the practice and aquisition of leadership behavior.

Leadership in social and cognitive domains in same-age classes has historically been in the hands of of a few high functioning children. Mixed-age advocates believe that situations offering all of the older children in a classroom someone younger and less mature than themselves affords all older children, not only the high functioning ones, the opportunity to be leaders. In this sense, mixed-age grouping may provide therapeutic and remedial benefits for at-risk children (Katz, et al. 1989).

The therapeutic effects of mixed-age interaction was evidenced in Furman, Rahe, and Hartup's (1979) study. The object of the study was to extend the knowledge concerning the contributions of same-age and mixed-age interactions to the growth of social competencies of young children. Twenty-four socially isolated children, ranging in age between 48 and 68 months were randomly assigned to younger partners, same-age partners, and a no-treatment group. The design of the study employed pretreatment observations, treatment sessions, and posttreatment observations. During the

pretreatment phase observers recorded the presence or absence of social interaction as well as coding each isolate's actions using the categories of reinforcement, punishment, and neutral acts. During the treatment each isolate was paired with two partners, each partner participated with the isolate child in five play sessions. Posttreatment observations occurred in the children's day-care classes where all the children were observed. The observers did not know the identities of the isolates. Statistical analyses were conducted in three stages. The researchers found that the pairing of isolates with younger partners led to the greatest increase in the older child's sociablitity, pairing with age-mates led to an intermediate increase, and the no-therapy participants exhibited no increase. The researchers cite that improvement in social interaction was so marked that posttreatment interaction was almost twice as frequent as pretreatment and essentially the same as social interaction of nonisolate children. The results indicate that the play sessions provided the isolates with the opportunity to direct social activity, something that had not occurred in the classroom. Given that behaviors may become more entrenched with time and therefore more resistant to change (Katz, 1991), it would be of interest to replicate this study with primary school children.

The research into the social effects of mixed age grouping parallels findings of theorists and teachers. Researchers have found support for cooperative learning and peer tutoring in classes that have older, more capable children, working with younger children. They found that mixed-age grouping had therapeutic effects for socially immature children. While the body of

research is small, and in some instances cannot be generalized across age groups or differing populations, it covers a range of social behaviors influenced by mixed-age grouping.

3.2.2 Cognitive Effects of Mixed-age Grouping

Early research into the cognitive benefits of mixed-age grouping used standardized achievement tests to compare children in mixed-age classes with the children in traditional same-age classes. The results showed that there was comparable achievement in both organizations (Schrankler, 1976; Milburn, 1981; Way, 1981), concluding that mixed-age classes offer no greater benefits for the cognitive domain than a traditional organization. In light of these results, researchers are exploring the cognitive benefits of mixed-age groupings by looking at how mixed-age may facilitate learning, as opposed to how mixed-age grouping facilitates achievement on standardized testing.

Many of the studies exploring the cognitive effects of mixed-age grouping have used children's play as a form of social interaction that indicates a cognitive progression. According to Parten (1932) the sequence of social behavior during early childhood goes from less interactive to more interactive behaviour. As children mature both socially and cognitively they become involved in a more socially interactive modes of play.

Mounts and Roopnarine's (1987) study compared the social-cognitive play patterns of three and four olds in mixed-age and same-age groups. For the study 108 middle income children were observed in six classrooms, two three year old classes, two four year old classes, and two mixed-age classes of three

and four year olds. Each child was observed during indoor free play periods for ten five-minute sessions during a two month period. The method of recording play and the operational definitions of the play categories are described in Rubin, Maioni, and Hornung (1976). The results suggest that the age composition does affect the social-cognitive play initiations of young children. Three year olds in the same-age classrooms were more likely to engage in parallel-manipulative play than three year olds in mixed-age classrooms. By contrast, the three year olds in the mixed-age classrooms were more likely to engage in parallel-constructive, interactive-constructive, and solitary-constructive play than the three year olds in same-age classrooms. It therefore appears that three year olds in mixed-age settings showed tendencies to "more mature" forms of play than three year olds in the same-age classes. The study found a lack of developmental differences between the three and four year olds in same age classes and those in the mixed-age classrooms, suggesting that in the mixed-age class the three year olds became more like the four year olds. It is hypothesized that the three year olds could have been making accommodative shifts in accordance with the developmental status of their more "mature" older peers. It was found that in the mixed-age classrooms the children initiated play interactions at random across age and sex. The findings that younger children in mixed age groups participate in more mature forms of play is supported by an earlier study by Goldman (1981). However, unlike Mounts and Roopnarine, Goldman's study found that sex and not age influences children's choice of playmates.

In her study, Goldman (1981) examined preschool children's participation in group play activities. Social participation of 116 children was observed in three classes of three year olds, three classes of four year olds, and three mixed-age classes. All were intact classes in the same homogeneous middle class neighbourhood. The classes fit Weikart's (1972) description of child-centered nursery classes. Using point-time sampling procedures (Altman, 1974) each class was observed on ten different days for a minimum of thirty minutes per day over a four month period. Observations were made during free time. Data was collected using Parten's (1932) categories of social play with guidelines for behavioral observations patterned after the work of Jones (1972) and McGrew (1972). Goldman's results indicated that sex, rather than age, was the dominant factor influencing children's choice of playmates within the mixed-age groups. Results further indicated that the age composition of preschool classes does influence the pattern of social participation. The three year olds in the mixed-age classes spent less time in parallel play than their counter parts in same-age classes. The four year olds in the mixed-age classes also spent less time in parallel play as well as spending less time in teacher directed activites, but more time in solitary play. This latter finding is important in that if offers indications that in mixed-age classes the older children had less need for teacher directed activities, suggesting that these children became more independent than their counterparts in same-age classes.

Results indicating that children can make accommodative shifts that enable them to participate in more mature forms of play, to spend an increased

amount of time in this form of play, as well as becoming more independent in their need of teacher direction, indicates that mixed-age grouping has the potential to offer cognitive benefits to young children. Both Mounts and Roopnarine (1987) and Goldman (1981) conducted their studies in classrooms not laboratory settings. Both studies involved preschool children and care needs to be taken in generalizing these findings to older primary children.

The goal of Azmitia's (1988) study was to identify features of collaboration that mediate cognitive growth. The mediators of cognitive growth examined in this study were: expertise, task engagement, strategies, conflict of ideas, guidance by an expert, and observational learning. One hundred and thirty-two five year olds from middle class preschools were tested to determine 40 experts and 40 novices. The children were assigned randomly to work alone, or to same ability (expert and novice) dyads, or to mixed ability dyads. The copying of a complex Lego model was used as a cognitive test and was chosen because it required children to represent spatial relations mentally, an important component of intelligence (Liben, Patterson, & Newcombe, 1981); secondly it entailed the use of problem solving, and finally; construction tasks are conducive to interactive benefits (Morrison & Kuhn, 1983, in Azmitia, 1988). Two Lego models were used, one for the pretest and posttest and the other for the interactive sessions. The children participated in four fifteen minute sessions with two or three days in between. Individual children were prestested to determine their classification as either an "expert" or "novice" and were then included in the dyad conditions involving two interactive

sessions of copying the Lego model. The two interactive sessions were coded for building accuracy by assigning a score between 0 (placement/removal incorrect in all three dimensions, color, size, and location) and 3 (placement correct in all three dimensions\removal). The children were individually posttested using the Lego building task as well as the block design subtest of the WPPSI. All the sessions were videotaped. The results were organized into two sections: first, the results for task performance, expertise, and generalization; and second, results concerning mediators. For the first section the results (significant to $p < .05$) indicated that mixed-ability dyads built more accurately due to the improvement of the novices; novices that worked with an expert improved significantly and these difference were maintained during the posttest when children worked alone and on a different model. Azmitia's results for generalization included the block design subtest of the WPPSI. Based on results from the WPPSI score the novices from the mixed-ability dyads scored higher than the novices from other conditions; however Azmitia does not mention the WPPSI as being used as a pretest measure, making use of these results in the posttest somewhat questionable. Results from the mediators of cognitive growth indicated that high-ability children spent more time on the task than low ability children; experts looked at the model being copied more frequently than novices, but compared to other conditions, the novices in mixed ability conditions looked at the model more often than novices in other conditions. Same ability dyads engaged in more task-related conversation than mixed-ability dyads which may be explained by the finding

that experts gave more correct explanation and demonstrations than novices. Azmitia's results are consistent with the hypothesis that collaboration can be more beneficial to learning than independent work. In this study, learning was maximized when children worked with an expert partner. Azmitia states this pattern supports Vygotsky's theory of the zone of proximal development. Her results indicate important mediators of cognitive growth that are facilitated by having an older more expert learner to work with. For mixed-age advocates, the relationship between expert and novice can be extrapolated to the relationship between the older more mature (expert) learner and the younger less able learner (novice) in a mixed-age learning situation.

The studies exploring the cognitive benefits of mixed-age grouping indicate that younger children engage in more sophisticated play and show more independence by relying less on teacher directed activities when they are grouped with older children. Younger children showed growth in cognitive development when working collaboratively with older more expert children. These studies show that mixed-age groupings have the potential to facilitate learning and offer positive cognitive effects for young children.

3.3 Summary

While the body of literature on mixed-age grouping is small and care must be taken not to generalize results across age groups and different populations, a comparative look at the practical, and the theoretical and

research based literature reveals that many of the assertions of the theorists and teachers of mixed-age grouping are supported by the research.

3.3.1 Social Benefits of Mixed-age Grouping

Research findings on the social benefits of mixed-age grouping indicate that younger children show more independence in mixed-age classes. Research also indicates that children have social perceptions of roles as they relate to age and they are able to make behavioral accomodations in regard to these understandings. The behavioral accommodations young children are capable of make them tolerant of the differences in their classmates in mixed-age classes. Leadership opportunities build self esteem and mixed-age classes provide opportunities for older children, even those considered "at risk" to take on leadership roles as they work with children younger than themselves. Mixed-age groupings thus provide environments that facilitate prosocial behaviors by providing practise in social competencies.

The success of peer tutoring and cooperative learning in mixed-age classes is supported by research that points out that children have "inherent" teaching skills and while they prefer to be taught by older children, they prefer teaching younger children. There were mixed results on the initiations of social interactions between mixed-age children an it was found that friendship patterns occur with same-age peers more often than mixed-age peers.

3.3.2 Cognitive Benefits of Mixed-age Grouping

The research on the cognitive benefits of mixed-age grouping supports the theory that children emulate and accommodate to more mature members

of the group. The presence of older more mature learners act as mediators of cognitive growth, supporting the concept of learning as outlined by Vygotsky's zone of proximal development.

The concept of the zone of proximal development offers a vast field for needed research. Vygotsky (1978) believes that each curriculum area has its own specific relation to children's development and the relation varies as children go through stages of development. He states that there is not one formula to be used for an examination of formal learning, but that extensive research based on the concept of the zone of proximal development is necessary. Vygotsky's theory offers significant possibilities for research in mixed-age classes. "The value of theory will be to direct research to those behaviors for which age relations are truly significant rather than simply present", (Lougee, 1979, p.39).

Theorists and practioners espouse a continuous progress nongraded philosophy with a developmentally appropriate curriculum, using mixed-age grouping as the best organization to achieve this model. There is a need to explore mixed-age grouping and how this organization supports the philosophy of nongradedness. The present move to nongraded mixed-age classrooms in British Columbia's schools offers researchers unlimited possibilities for research in this area.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHOD AND PROCEDURE

4.1 Design

A survey was conducted in order to determine the teachers' and parents' perceptions of pedagogical successes and problems in implementing primary mixed-age classes. The Teacher Questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed to elicit information in five areas: (a) teachers' background training and education; (b) information on school restructuring to mixed-age classes; (c) teachers' conceptual understandings about mixed-age classes; (d) teacher's discussions of benefits and concerns for children in mixed-age classes; (e) concerns about teaching practises in mixed-age classes; and (f) training and education needs for teaching in mixed-age classes.

The Parent Questionnaire (see Appendix B) was designed to elicit three areas of information: (a) background information, (b) parents' conceptual understanding about mixed-age classes, and (c) parents' perceptions of benefits and concerns for children in mixed-age classes. Parents' understanding of school initiatives contributes to their acceptance or the rejection of those initiatives. Children are affected not only by school initiatives, but also by their parent perceptions of the initiatives. The Primary Program (1990b) acknowledges the importance of a partnership between parents and schools. Partnerships with parents help to extend the concept of integration by building connections between a child's life and learning at home and life and learning in school. By including parents, this study recognizes the added perspective

that parents' perceptions will give to the an overall understanding of the implementation of mixed-age classes.

The survey was conducted in two British Columbia School Districts. Permission was given by both Superintendents to conduct the survey in their respective districts. Agreement in principle to participate in this study was obtained from the administration and the teachers of the seven schools involved and a proposal was then approved by the University of British Columbia Behavioral Sciences Screening Committee For Research and Other Studies Involving Human Subjects.

4.2 Sample

4.2.1 Teacher Sample

The sample consisted of 64 primary teachers from two school districts, 32 from District A and 32 from District B. District A was chosen since the implementation of mixed-age grouping was in its initial stages. One school had small numbers of teachers teaching mixed-age classes for their second year and the remaining schools had just begun enrolling mixed-ages that year. District A is a small district, employing 88 teachers for a student population of 1,565. District B was chosen for comparison purposes. In a number of schools mixed-age grouping had been in place for at least two years. Also, District B is a large school district employing 878 teachers for a student population of 14,984. Both school districts are in the lower mainland of B.C., are not neighbouring districts, and are within 50 miles of one another.

All of the primary teachers in District A were included in the survey. The teachers taught in four different schools in the district: (a) a school with 357 students from Year 1 to Intermediate 1 (grade 4) with fourteen primary classes, (b) a school with 205 students from Year 1 to Intermediate 4 (grade 7) with six primary classes, (c) a school with 73 students from Year 1 to Intermediate 4 (grade 7) with 4 primary classes, and (d) a school with 69 students from Year 1 to Year 3 with four primary classes.

The schools from District B included in the survey were identified by a local administrator as schools in which mixed-age grouping had been in practise for a minimum of two years. The teachers selected from District B taught in three schools: (a) a school with 641 students from Year 1 to Intermediate 4 (grade 7) with thirteen primary classes; (b) a school with 192 students from Year 1 to Year 4 with 7.5 primary classes; and (c) a school with 277 students from Year 1 to Year 3 with ten primary classes.

4.2.2 Parent Sample

Parents from two primary mixed-age classes in each of the districts were included in the survey. In District A the largest school was selected and the two classes included in the parent survey were randomly chosen from all the classes doing mixed-age grouping in that school. In District B the school for the parent survey was randomly selected from the three participating schools and the classes included were randomly selected from mixed-age classes within that school. A total of 93 Parent Questionnaires were distributed, 44

questionnaires to District A and 49 in District B. The Parent Questionnaires were sent home with the children and returned in the same manner.

4.3 Procedures

The researcher was invited to meetings of Primary teachers to introduce herself. A very brief description of the study was given and an invitation to participate was extended. These meetings took place approximately a month prior to the distribution of the questionnaires. Parents' participation was requested through letters from the school administration introducing the researcher and the study. The letters were attached to the questionnaires.

The Teacher and Parent Questionnaires were distributed by the researcher to both districts on the same day in June 1992. There were thirty-two Teacher Questionnaires distributed in each district, one for each enrolling primary teacher and others were given to learning assistance and/or P.E. specialists. The parent questionnaires were sent home with the children and returned in the same manner. In one case in District A where the school is forty-five miles away arrangements were made to return the Teacher Questionnaires by interschool mail; the remainder of the questionnaires (in both districts) were picked up by the researcher ten days later.

4.4 Analysis of the Data

The data from each question on both the Teacher and the Parent Questionnaires were sorted, collated and presented in tabular form (see

Appendix C and D) for comparison of relationships between variables. The data were then organized into larger categories of meaning for the purpose of discussion. Within districts, all teachers' data were collapsed across all schools.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to access information on mixed-age grouping from both teachers and parents. In order to obtain this information two separate questionnaires were given to the respective groups. The participant groups in the study included groups of teachers and parents from District A and District B.

In this chapter the data and results from the teacher and the parent questionnaires will be presented separately.

5.1 Teacher Questionnaire Results

5.1.1 Teachers' Background, Training, and Education

The majority of teachers (N = 28 of 44) participating in this study received their teaching degrees between 1970 and 1989, while relatively few (N = 9/44) had not completed degrees. Teachers from District A received their degrees from the University of British Columbia (UBC) (N = 12/24), and from Simon Fraser University (SFU) (N = 6/24). Teachers from District B received their degrees from UBC (N = 8/20) and from SFU (N = 9\20). Combined results from District A and B indicate that eleven of twenty teachers from UBC are teaching mixed-age classes and twelve of fifteen teachers from SFU are teaching mixed-age classes. In this study over half of the teachers (N = 29/44) taught mixed-age grouping. The average years of experience for teachers

teaching mixed-age classes is 14.6 years. The average years of experience for teachers not teaching mixed-age classes is 14.2 years.

5.1.2 Data On School Restructuring To Mixed-age Grouping

Teachers were asked to respond to questions pertaining to the restructuring of their school organization and staffing in the change over to mixed-age grouping. A comparison of the responses between the two districts as to whether there had been school-wide implementation goals and plans for restructuring their schools to a mixed-age organization revealed a discrepancy in their responses. There were more "yes" answers given by District A and more "no" responses from District B as shown in Table C-1.

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* Insert Table C-1 About here *

Anecdotal comments (see Appendix E-1) listing specific goals indicate that teachers in District A had no clear goals for implementation and while teachers in District B responded that they did have goals, they made comments such as, "I don't remember any specific goals, but ... after a year of meetings, studying the program...it is just generally accepted that we divide groups ... into two age levels." This would indicate that the goals were not well articulated. Neither district could identify time lines for mixed-age goal implementation.

In District B a majority of teachers (N = 14/20) reported that "all to most" staff were involved in restructuring to mixed-age grouping whereas District A teacher (N = 12/23) responses indicate "some" staff were involved (see Appendix C-19). Teachers were asked how implementation to mixed-age grouping had affected their staffs. Table C-2 indicates that the staffs in District B reported feeling more involved in the implementation of mixed-age grouping in their schools than the staffs of District A.

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* Insert Table C-2 about here *

District A's responses included the following descriptors, "resentment, hostility"; "divided the staff"; "caused conflict"; and "caused a great rift between the staff"; while the descriptors from District A include, "more collaborative", "mutual respect", "united us", "cooperative", and "positive influence".

5.1.3 Teachers' Conceptual Understanding of Mixed-Age Grouping

The respondents were asked a series of questions to determine the philosophical underpinnings of mixing age grouping as identified in the literature. Teachers gave a variety of opinions when asked why there was a move to mixed-age grouping. The three most popular responses were: a) Year 2000/Primary Prog (N = 9/44); b) continuous progress (N = 8/44); and c) helps in the move away from a curriculum driven program (N = 4/44). These results

were obtained by a compilation of the anecdotal responses from the questionnaire. All of the anecdotal comments were sorted and similar responses were grouped together and entered in Table C-3. For a detailed list of the comments see Appendix E-3.

To determine more specific conceptual understandings the respondents were asked to identify which group (older, younger, both groups or neither group) either benefitted or was disadvantaged by mixed-age grouping and to support their responses. The majority of teachers (N = 28/44) from both districts agreed that both groups benefited from mixed-age grouping and that neither group was disadvantaged by this configuration(N = 29/44). Anecdotal statements (see Appendix E-4) from District A were generally positive, however, the responses did not identify specific statements from the literature. District B on the other hand also had a wide variety of responses, but their answers were more in line with the philosophy outlined in the literature.

While teachers from both districts (N = 31/44) reported that mixed-age grouping facilitates cooperative learning, fewer teachers (N = 23/44) reported that mixed-age grouping supports peer tutoring. Anecdotal comments concerning cooperative learning and peer tutoring will be expanded upon in the next chapter. There was also agreement amongst the teachers (N = 25/44) from both districts that mixed-age classes were less competitive than same-age classes. Finally, both groups of teachers (N = 37/44) agreed that keeping a number of students for more than one year had advantages. Table C-4 outlines

the most commonly cited responses supporting the idea of keeping children with a teacher for more than one year.

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* Insert Table C-4 about here *

5.1.4 Benefits And Concerns For Children In Mixed-age Classes

The survey included both teachers enrolling mixed-age classes and teachers enrolling single-age classes. In the case of teachers enrolling mixed-age classes their practical experiences teaching mixed-age were drawn on to identify the benefits and concerns they have for children in their classes. In the cases of teachers not teaching mixed-age it was important to identify what they perceived to be the benefits and concerns for children in mixed-age classes as a means to understanding their reticence to teach mixed-age classes.

Teachers identified (see Appendix C-5) that the optimum age span in mixed-age classes included any of the dual-age configurations (classes enrolling only two age groups), whereas multi-age configurations (classes enrolling three to four age groups) were a less preferred choice.

Teachers enrolling mixed-age classes reported few problems for children in their classes (see Appendix C-6). Teachers not teaching mixed-age classes foresaw problems for children enrolled in mixed-age classes (see Appendix C-7) that were not reported by the teachers enrolling mixed-age classes. Problems for children in mixed-age classes will be discussed more thoroughly in the next

chapter. Both teachers enrolling mixed-age and those not enrolling mixed-age (N = 25/44) identified that discipline problems would be the same as in any class. Lastly, teacher's perceptions of children's socialization preferences indicate that most children choose a balance of same-age and mixed-age socializing in a mixed-age class (see Appendix C-8).

Teachers reported that continuous progress (N = 16/43), having older role models (N = 14/43) and learning from each other (N = 7/43) and a family atmosphere (N = 7/43) were the most important benefits of a mixed-age classroom.

5.1.5 Concerns About Teaching Practise

Teachers were asked to rank order areas of knowledge pertaining to their teaching practise with which they were most concerned. The information is shown in Table C-9.

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* Insert Table C-9 about here *

Approximately half of the teachers (N = 23\44) reported that math was a specific curriculum concern that they found the most difficult to teach in a mixed-age class (see Appendix C-10).

5.1.6 Teacher Training and Educational Needs for Teaching Mixed-age Classes

Data were collected on the types of training and education that would be helpful for teachers implementing mixed-age groupings. When asked where they learned about mixed-age grouping most teachers (N=32/44) identified "practical experience", the Primary Program Document (N=28/44), and professional reading (N=23/44) as the source of learning about mixed-age grouping.

Just over half of the teachers (N=23/44) reported that their teacher education programs had not prepared them at all for teaching a mixed-age classes. When asked to rank order the reasons that led them to consider teaching a mixed-age class the teachers chose items shown in Table C-11.

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* Insert Table C-11 about here *

Teachers were asked to rank order the ideal training experiences that they believed may influence the quality of teaching in a primary mixed-age class. Table C-12 outlines their responses.

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* Insert Table C-12 about here *

Teachers were asked to identify the qualities and background they thought a teacher enrolling a mixed-age class should possess. The three most

popular choices were: first, a knowledge of child development; second, they should possess flexibility; and third, they should have patience. Finally, teachers identified district or school based initiatives, shown in Table C-13, that they believed would help teachers in the change to mixed-age grouping.

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* Insert Table C-13 about here *

5.2 Parent Survey Results

5.2.1 Background Information

Parents were asked to identify the number of years their children had been enrolled in mixed-age classes. Nine of nineteen District A parents reported their children had been in the mixed-age program for one year, eight parents reported two years and two parents reported three years. In District B, seventeen of twenty-two parents reported their children had been in the mixed-age program for one year, four reported two years and one reported three years. Nineteen of forty-one parents felt that no one had helped them to understand the reasons for the change to mixed-age grouping, fifteen indicated the teacher had helped, nine indicated the principal, six indicated district staff, and four reported "other" to the question of help in understanding mixed-age grouping. The choices for this question were not mutually exclusive.

5.2.2 Benefits for Children in Mixed-age Classes

Parents had mixed responses about the age group they thought benefitted from mixed-age grouping as indicated in Table D-1.

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*Insert Table D-1 about here *

Parents reported that the three curriculum/educational areas they felt their children benefited from in a mixed-age class were: social/emotional growth, language arts and math (see Appendix D-2). Parents (N=30/41) perceived that older children were good role models in mixed-age classes. They saw role modelling, working with peers and social/emotional development as the most important benefits for their children in these classes. Parents (N=31/41) agreed that children remaining with the same teacher for more than one year was an advantage.

5.2.3 Concerns for Children in Mixed-age Classes

Parents had mixed comments in regard to the group of children they believed were disadvantaged by mixed-age grouping. While 17 of 41 parents reported that neither group was disadvantaged by mixed-age classes the remaining reports were more varied. Four parents from District A and nine parents from District B reported older children, one parent from District A and four parents from District B reported younger children and finally one parent

from District A and four parents from District B believed both groups were disadvantaged.

In curriculum and educational areas, parents from both districts were concerned about math, social/emotional development, and physical development in mixed-age classes (see Appendix D-3). Parents' concerns about mixed-age classes are summarized in Table D-4.

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* Insert Table D-4 about here *

Finally parents were asked whether they would they choose to have their children continue in mixed-age classes. Twelve of 19 District A parents responded yes, four responded no, and three gave no response. Eight of 22 District B parents responded yes, eight responded no, and six gave no response.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

6.1 Teachers' Background, Training and Education

The study included teachers who were teaching mixed-age classes as well as those who were teaching same-age classes. The majority of the teachers involved in this study received their teaching degrees between 1970 and 1989. When teachers received their training had little relationship as to whether they were teaching mixed-age or same-age classes. The average number of years of teaching experience for both groups was just over 14 years, refuting the popular assumption that only the more recently trained and educated teachers are open to new ideas and change. Although the year teachers received their training had no relationship as to whether or not they were teaching mixed-age classes, the results indicate that where teachers received their training may have made a difference. Proportionately more teachers who attended Simon Fraser University than those who attended UBC were teaching mixed-age classes. The results suggest that the length of practical experience offered in Simon Fraser's PDP teacher training program may have had some influence in teachers' decisions to try mixed-age grouping. Practical experience was reported as an important means for teachers to learn about mixed-age grouping. Five teachers from SFU identified that their teacher training program had prepared them for mixed-age grouping. Their statements include: "I found Simon Fraser University's P.D.P Program to be excellent! The practical experience was perfect", "Experience in the classroom and lots of

chances to work with and observe children is vital", "close match", and "It provided a good basis." While Simon Fraser's practica may not have directly taught the teachers about mixed-age grouping, by its very length, it afforded student-teachers the opportunity to work with colleagues and children over extended periods. The length of the practical experience was a major difference in the the teacher training programs at both universities at the time the teachers participating in this study took their training and may have influenced the differences found in this study. The difference in the length of practical experience at SFU and UBC no longer exists.

6.1.1 School Restructuring to Mixed-age Grouping

The majority of teachers in District A reported that they had set no goals for the implementation of mixed-age grouping and that only some staff were involved. Two comments from District A identify the attitude to restructuring that appears to have been taken; "usually any one who wants to may teach it, not everyone is pushed into it," and "this structure is encouraged but not forced." When asked how the implementation had affected the staff, District A's responses included "divided the staff", "a lot of stress", "caused conflict", and "caused some animosity".

On the other hand, District B reported that "all to most" staff had been involved in the implementation, and their comments identify that two schools had goals for restructuring; "I don't remember any specific goals, but ... after a year of meetings, studying the program ... it is generally accepted that we divide groups ... into two age levels," and "We decided as a staff two years ago to implement dual-age classes." Comments from District B on how

implementation had affected their staff "united us", "more collaborative", "positive influence", attest to a shared sense of purpose and success in their restructuring. In District A, where there were no goals and only some of the staff involved, implementation was reported to have caused conflict and divided staffs. Such a high degree of strife could affect the success of implementation.

6.1.2 Teachers' Conceptual Understanding of Mixed-age Grouping

The majority of the responses to why there had been a move to mixed-age grouping were generally positive, but did not identify theories which specifically support mixed-age grouping. However, ten respondents did report that mixed-age grouping facilitated continuous progress. Nine respondents reported that the move to mixed-age grouping was because of the Year 2000/Primary Program. Mixed-age grouping is not mentioned in the Primary Foundation Document (1990) and is mentioned only briefly in the Primary Resource Document (1990) in which mixed-age grouping is suggested as one possible organization to support a nongraded curriculum. It was difficult to assess whether the teachers' responses were because they understood how the tenets of the Year 2000/Primary Program were facilitated by mixed-age grouping or because they felt mixed-age grouping was endorsed by the Primary Program. Responses which indicate that teachers were not aware of the theory supporting mixed-age grouping were: "to provide experiences of different age and social groups", "it's more natural", "progressive thinking" and "even distribution of behavior problems."

The majority of responses from District A reported that both younger and older groups benefit from mixed-age grouping. However, support for this position did not identify the social and cognitive benefits cited in the literature. The responses include, "each has an important role", "older students can help younger", and "both learn from each other". On the other hand, District B responses offer more specific reasons for their beliefs that both age groups benefit from mixed-age grouping. District B's responses correspond to the findings related to the social and cognitive benefits outlined in the literature on mixed-age groupings. District B tended to agree with the statement that mixed-age classes benefit both younger and older children because the "differing roles raise self esteem, children learn at differing rates, older learn by teaching, younger have role models and mixed-age fosters a cooperative, caring environment". Two of the respondents reported that if the mixed-age model adopted keeps children with the same teacher for two years, then each child has the opportunity to experience both positions.

Teachers from both districts reported that mixed-age grouping facilitates cooperative learning and both districts appeared to have a good understanding of this teaching strategy and how mixed-age grouping facilitates its use. While cooperative learning is not directly related to age, the teachers' responses corresponded to Katz, Evangelou, and Hartman's (1989) suggestion that cooperative learning is related to the exploitation of differences between participants and as such mixed-age classes by their nature are made up of rich diversity and those differences and the leadership potential of the older group

facilitates cooperative learning. One teacher reported that "cooperative learning requires different roles to be taken and some ages can take on leadership roles or learn to subside and allow others the opportunity".

While teachers in both districts understand how mixed-age grouping facilitates cooperative learning, there is less understanding of how mixed-age grouping facilitates peer tutoring. Twenty-three of forty-four teachers reported that mixed-age facilitates peer tutoring. Of the twenty-three, very few anecdotal responses beyond, "older students can help younger students", indicate an understanding of how mixed-age supports this teaching strategy. From the responses there is no sense of how peer tutoring benefits the older child.

Five responses from District B, (i.e. "it becomes a necessity with so many levels", "need older to help", "natural solution to time constraints", "it's difficult to give all the children the one to one they need, so there's lots of opportunity for peer tutoring", and "teacher might be engaged in teaching another group and not available") describe a disturbing picture of the possibility and potential of peer tutoring being used, not for the benefits it offers learners, but to relieve pressures teachers are feeling in their classrooms. This result will be compared with some concerns of parents later in this paper.

6.1.3 Benefits and Concerns for Children in Mixed-age Classes

Teachers from both districts reported that mixed-age classes were less competitive than same age classes. There was overwhelming agreement on the advantages of keeping children for more than one year. A positive aspect

of having children for more than one year was that there was no time wasted at the beginning of each year establishing relationships. Children's strengths and weaknesses were already familiar to the teacher, thus facilitating each child's continuing progress. Having already established relationships with the children and their parents, and having those children know the teacher's expectations helped create a caring environment where children felt free to take the risks necessary for learning to happen.

The teachers in this study identified very few concerns for students that were attributed directly to mixed-age grouping. It was reported that discipline in a mixed-age class was not a concern as it would not differ significantly from that of a same-age class. There was a concern that mixed-age classes enrolling three or more ages was too great a span for both the teacher and the children. The majority of the teachers reported a preference for a mixed-age organization that included only two ages. Parents' lack of knowledge about mixed-age grouping caused concerns for teachers. One teacher summed it up, "I believe [parents] would be more supportive if more PR had been done before the change...."

Teachers in mixed-age classes reported few problems or concerns for the children in their classes. Teachers who were not teaching mixed-age classes had concerns about: (a) meeting the individual needs of children in a mixed-age class, (b) how they might ensure that neither group of children felt threatened or inadequate, and (c) challenging the more capable students. These teachers expressed concerns for children in their care.

Teachers reported a wide variety of benefits for children in mixed-age classes. Continuous progress was identified as the most important benefit. Teachers working in mixed-age classes understood the benefits this setting had for implementing a continuous progress program. One teacher summed up the benefits of mixed-age: "...[children] are allowed to learn at their own pace. Teachers are learning not to stereotype children because they aren't expecting them to all be the same now." Other benefits reported were children learning from each other and the family atmosphere of mixed-age groupings.

The importance of older role models and the help they provide for younger students is well understood by the teachers and has been reported many times throughout the study. Teachers reported that the socialization patterns of the children showed a balance, when given a choice the children mixed well between age groups. Children chose same-age play and workmates as often as they chose someone of a differing age. Several teachers identified gender as being the determining factor in choice of work and playmates more often than age.

6.1.4 Concerns About Teaching Practises

Teachers reported that knowledge about the characteristics of learners was of most concern to them in their teaching practise. With the removal of grades as terms of reference and the adoption of mixed-age classrooms the teachers in this study have identified the need for a new way of understanding the characteristics of the children they are working with.

Other concerns were methods/practise, followed by curriculum and finally content/subject. The ranking of the responses (see Appendix C-9) shows a general concern in all of these areas of teaching practice. While the question did ask about concerns in a mixed-age class, it is possible that the responses included concerns not limited to mixed-age, but to the Primary Program in general, especially in light of the major paradigm shift teachers have faced with the adoption of the Primary Program.

Math was identified as a concern specific to mixed-age classes. Teachers reported math as the curriculum that they found most difficult to integrate into a continuous progress mixed-age classroom. Math is difficult for teachers as they adopt an integrated and interdisciplinary style of teaching and learning in mixed-age classrooms. Several teachers reported that they taught math separately, which suggests that they determine that math is disconnected from other areas of study. Compounding the problem is the belief that math (as identified by one respondent) must be learned in a specific sequence. In a nongraded mixed-age classroom teachers were faced with children at differing stages of development in their mathematics learning and they experienced difficulty determining where the children were at in a continuum of learning that was identified as hierarchical in nature and thus taught math separately to each age group and did not integrate it into other areas of learning. One respondent described it, "I find [math] the most difficult to arrange (set up) in mixed-age grouping. I teach math separately".

6.1.5 Teacher Training and Education Needs for Teaching Mixed-age Classes

Several themes ran through teachers' reflections on their needs for teaching mixed-age classes. "Trying something new" was foremost in teachers' decisions to teach mixed-age grouping. Networking with colleagues was also identified as a reason that led teachers to decide to teach mixed-age classes and it was identified as one of the district or school based initiatives that would facilitate implementation of mixed-age grouping. When faced with innovation and change, teachers identify a need for sharing and talking about their teaching practises.

Closely related to networking with colleagues are school visitations. Teachers place a high priority on the need for visiting schools that enroll mixed-age classrooms. Observing mixed-age classes while they are in session, followed with on-the-spot discussion with the practicing teachers offers observing teachers a first hand look at how the concept of mixed-age is implemented. Also, visiting classrooms often serves to validate teachers. When teachers recognize elements of their own practices in the classrooms they visit they gain confidence in their own teaching.

Knowledge of child development is identified as an important component of training necessary for teachers in mixed-age classes. With the shift from a graded curriculum to a more developmentally appropriate curriculum, teachers have identified a need for a deeper understanding of child development theory and how this development relates to their teaching practice.

While teachers reported that their education programs had not prepared them for teaching mixed-age classes, it must be pointed out that, while not a new idea, implementation of nongraded mixed-age classes is a recent innovation in British Columbia and the majority of the teachers in the survey completed their training before implementation began. Universities in British Columbia are beginning to offer Education courses which cover the tenets of the Primary Program, including continuous progress and mixed-age groupings.

6.2 Parents' Background Information

The parents in the study reported that they had not been well informed about the rationale for mixed-age classes, but when they had received information it was first from teachers, second, from principals, and last, from other district staff. The parents in District A reported that the majority of their children had been in a mixed-age class between one and two years and in District B parents reported the majority of their children had been in the program only one year.

6.2.1 Parent Perceived Benefits for Children in Mixed-age Classes

Parents in both districts had mixed responses about the age group they thought benefited from mixed-age grouping. Just less than half of the parents thought both groups of children benefited from mixed-age classes, followed closely by those parents who believe that the younger group benefits more. From the responses to several questions the parents report that the older children benefit from teaching younger children and that the younger children

benefit because they have an opportunity to "learn from" and to be "challenged by" the older children.

Parents reported that role modelling and working with peers was a positive experience for their children's social and emotional development and were the most important benefits of a mixed-age class. They were very supportive of their children staying with a teacher for more than one year. The response matched those of teachers, in that they saw less time wasted in September and they appreciated the importance of the rapport that had been established between teachers and students and the importance this had for their children's social/emotional and cognitive development.

6.2.2 Parent Concerns for Children in Mixed-age Classes

Just less than half of the parents of both districts reported that neither group of children was disadvantaged by mixed-age grouping. Interestingly, the parents as well as the teachers were most concerned with the math curriculum in a mixed-age class. Parents also reported a concern for the social and emotional development of their children. While the results did not indicate that parents have major concerns for their children in mixed-age classes, they expressed concern about teachers' abilities in teaching what they perceived to be a broad range of learning needs and they were concerned about teachers commitment to the program. Parents expressed a concern that older children may not be challenged enough, they understood the benefits for younger children, but were less sure of the benefits for older. They thought the older

children "may be held back academically". Other concerns were that there may be unrealistic expectations for younger children.

Finally, when asked if they would have their children continue in mixed-age classes the majority of District A parent were in favor of their children continuing, while the parents in District B were evenly split between those in favor of their children continuing and those who said they did not wish them to continue in a mixed-age class. The majority of District B children had only been in mixed-age classes for one year and many of the respondents who did not wish their children to continue in mixed age had children that would become the oldest children the following year. These parents reported that "the older children may not have the same opportunity as the younger for working ahead" and, as one parent declared "I believe children should be equipped with the learning skills before being asked to become part of the teaching staff". These parents did not understand the benefits of being the oldest in a mixed-age group and a few had major concerns about their children being used as teachers.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

The response to mixed-age grouping by the teachers and parents in this study paralleled the findings in the literature. Both teachers and parents reported social and cognitive benefits for the children enrolled in mixed-age classes. The results indicate that mixed-age grouping is a successful organization for supporting a nongraded continuous progress philosophy and identified areas that could have implications for future implementation and practice of mixed-age grouping .

7.1 Implications for Practise

While the parents and teachers generally felt positive and reported benefits for the children in mixed-age classes, with improved understanding, there are several areas that would enhance and facilitate the implementation and practise of future and existing mixed-age classes.

The results indicated that when staffs undertake educational change or innovations the setting of goals and the involvement of a majority of staff members is important for creating a shared sense of purpose and having a positive influence on staff relations. The success of any change is contingent on the attitude of the participants and a positive attitude by staffs would facilitate the change to mixed-age grouping.

Inservice plays a key role in the successful implementation of new educational programs. The study identified several important aspects of

mixed-age grouping that would be facilitated by appropriate inservice. It is important that teachers and parents understand the philosophy supporting mixed-age grouping. The results of the study indicated that there is a need for more inservice on all aspects of the philosophy supporting mixed-age grouping as there are a proportion of teachers and parents that do not understand the benefits of mixed-age grouping. The study also identified several specific areas that were not well understood by a majority of the teachers. The use of peer tutoring in mixed-age classes and the value that this teaching experience provides children when it is used appropriately and the benefits for older children in mixed-age classes are two areas that were not well understood.

Inservice for parents is important. In times of educational change it is imperative that parents are kept well informed of the changes affecting their children. Parents' lack of knowledge about mixed-age grouping caused anxiety, concerns, and created added stress for teachers in this study. In the future it is important that parent education regarding mixed-age be well understood before implementation and that it remains a continuing focus over several years as new parents enter the educational system each year.

Implications for the future training and ongoing professional development of primary teachers were identified by the concerns teachers had for their teaching practice in a mixed-age class. The mathematics curriculum was the area that stood out as being most problematic for teachers in a mixed-age classroom. There was also an expressed need for a deeper understanding of child development and learning in primary-age children. These identified needs

of practising teachers should be seriously considered in the training of student teachers.

The method of personal development preferred by teachers was clearly identified by the study. Teachers expressed a strong need for collaboration with colleagues. Administrators considering implementation of mixed-age grouping would do well to recognize this need and consider various methods for providing teachers with time for collaboration. The method of professional development preferred by teachers was school visitations. Teachers found that visiting classrooms was a valuable way for them to learn about mixed-age grouping. Administrators need to look at creative ways that teachers within a school could spend time in each others' classrooms, as well as providing for out of school and out of district visits that allow teachers to visit exemplary sites of mixed-age classes.

Finally it should be recognized that the need to "try something new" was the most popular reason reported by the teachers as their reason for teaching mixed-age classes. While change has been identified as a difficult process, it appears that for a good portion of the teachers in this study, change was welcomed. The second reason for trying mixed-age grouping was "personal philosophy". The combination of personal philosophy with the desire to try something new identified that those teachers that moved to mixed-age grouping had a basic understanding of the philosophy supporting the changes in teaching practise that they embarked on in their move to mixed-age classes. It is important to reiterate that for success with the implementation of

mixed-age grouping it is crucial that the teachers involved have a good understanding of the philosophy supporting this organization and how mixed-age grouping benefits the children.

7.1.1 Implications for Research

The body of research on mixed-age grouping is small, offering researchers many avenues of exploration. There is a need to determine why teachers experienced problems implementing a continuous progress model of mathematics instruction for primary children and what is needed for the future training and inservice of teachers. There is also the need to explore a "whole language" style of mathematics instruction, where math is not divorced from, but integrated into the content structures of primary classrooms. Further research and design of the mathematics curriculum appears to be needed to determine what is sequential in mathematics, what must be built upon, and distinguish it from other areas that do not rely on hierarchical types of learning and instruction.

Taking into account Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" there is a need to explore how mixed-age grouping provides cognitive benefits by facilitating childrens' learning, at differing stages of their development, and in differing situations found within classroom settings. This research would add depth to the understanding of child development as it relates to learning in primary-age children.

In conclusion, by using a survey design, this study was able to access important information on a number of issues related to mixed-age grouping.

The questionnaire format provided the respondents with a means to express (anonymously) their beliefs and opinions. The ensurance of anonymity for the respondents and the use of open-ended questions were positive attributes of this design. While the questions focused and directed the study, the use of open-ended questions allowed for an in-depth collection of information.

This study was conducted on a small sampling. A broader examination of the topic of mixed-age grouping could be gained by conducting the study on a larger group and by expanding the sampling to include principals, vice-principals and students. For future research, conducting the survey with a larger group, including a number of interviews, and observations of mixed-age classrooms would provide a balanced and comprehensive study of mixed-age grouping.

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APPENDIX A: TEACHER SURVEY AND COVERING LETTER

TEACHER SURVEY OF PRIMARY MIXED-AGE CLASSES

Background Information

1. What year did you complete your teacher training?_____

2. What year did you complete your university degree?_____

3. How long have you taught at the following levels?

   Preschool_____ Primary_____
   Year 1 (K)_____ Intermediate_____ Other_____

4. Are you teaching a nongrade primary mixed-age class? If yes, how many years_____
   YES___ NO___

5. In your school are there implementation goals and plans for restructuring to a nongraded mixed-age organization? YES___ NO___
   If yes list THREE of them.

   1._____

   2._____

   3._____

6. Is there a time-line for restructuring to nongraded primary mixed-age grouping included in the implementation plans? If yes, what is the time line?_____ YES___ NO___

7. To what extent was the staff involved in the implementation plans for the change to nongraded mixed-age grouping?

   a great deal___ somewhat___ a little___
   not at all___

8. The restructuring to a nongraded primary mixed-age organization in your school has included...

all staff____ most staff____ some staff____
no staff____

9. How has implementation of nongraded mixed-age grouping affected your staff?

_____

_____

10. How are the students selected when setting up mixed-age primary classes?

_____

_____

11. In your opinion what are the reasons for the move to mixed-age grouping?

_____

_____

12. List THREE SCHOOL or DISTRICT based initiatives that would help teachers in the change to primary mixed-age grouping.

1._____

2._____

3._____

Advantages/Disadvantages of Primary Mixed-age Grouping

13. What group of children do you feel benefit most from mixed-age grouping?

older children___ younger children___
both groups___ neither group___

Why?_____

14. What group of children do you feel are at a disadvantage in a mixed-age group?

older children___ younger children___
both groups___ neither group___

Why?_____

15. What is the optimum age span for mixed-age classes?

Dual Year	Multi-year
Year 1-2___	Year 1-2-3___
Year 2-3___	Year 2-3-4___
Year 3-4___	Year 1-2-3-4___

16. List the 3 MOST IMPORTANT benefits for children in primary mixed-age classes.

1._____

2._____

3._____

17. List the 3 MOST SERIOUS problems for children in primary mixed-age grouping.

1._____

2._____

3._____

18. To what extent does mixed-age grouping facilitate cooperative learning in a primary classroom?

a great deal___ somewhat___ a little___
not at all___

Why?_____

19. To what extent does mixed-age grouping facilitate peer tutoring in a primary classroom.

a great deal___ somewhat___ a little___
not at all___

Why?_____

20. Are the children in a primary mixed-age class more or less competitive with each other than in a same-age class?

more___ less___ same___ not certain___

21. Discuss discipline in regard to primary mixed-age grouping.

_____

_____

22. How would you best describe children's socialization PREFERENCES in your primary mixed-age class?

a) the children prefer to play/work mostly in mixed-age groups
b) the children prefer to play/work mostly in same-age groups
c) there is a balance of same-age and mixed age socializing
d) other_____

23. Some people believe that keeping a number of students for more than one year has advantages.

Discuss whether you agree or disagree with this statement, and why.

_____

_____

24. Where did you learn about mixed-age grouping?

Primary Program Documents___ Inservice___
Professional Reading___
Professional Development___
Practical Experience___
Other_____

25. Please rank in order of importance (from 1 = most important to 8 = least important) the reasons that led you to consider teaching a primary mixed-age class.

__ school policy
__ district policy
__ learning new teaching strategies
__ networking with colleagues
__ frustration with traditional graded model
__ university course work
__ personal Philosophy
__ an interest in trying something new
__ other_____

26. Please rank in order of importance (from 1 = most important to 5 = least important) the areas of knowledge with which you are most concerned in regard to teaching children in a primary mixed-age grouping.

__ Content/subject matter
__ Methods/practice
__ Curriculum
__ Characteristics of learners
__ Other_____

27. List THREE CURRICULUM areas of most concern in teaching a primary mixed-age group.

_____

_____

28. Listed below are a number of training experiences that may influence the quality of teaching in a primary mixed-age class. Please rank in order of importance (from 1 = most important to 6 = least important) the ideal training experience for teachers of primary mixed-age classes.

__ Professional Development
__ Pre-service Practicum
__ In-service experience
__ Specialized Primary Education
__ Child Development Knowledge
__ Liberal Arts Education
__ other

Comments_____

29. To what extent did your teacher education program prepare you for primary mixed-age classrooms? _____

_____

30. Please indicate where you received your teacher training.

UBC____ SFU____ UVic____
Other_____

31. Ideally, what qualities and background do you think a teacher teaching in a primary mixed-age class should possess?

_____

_____

Centre for the Study of
Curriculum and Instruction
Faculty of Education
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-6502
Fax: (604) 822-8234

Dear Teacher

RE: TEACHER SURVEY OF PRIMARY MIXED-AGE CLASSES

As part of my requirements of my Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education I am conducting this survey on mixed-age grouping. The purpose of the project is to gather information that will improve understanding of mixed-age grouping and facilitate the continued implementation of mixed-age classes. To succeed in this task it is vital to obtain you views on mixed-age grouping. I ask that you take a few minutes to fill out the enclosed questionnaire.

Be assured that your responses to the questionnaire are confidential. The questionnaire contains no identifiable personal information and the identity of the school districts will not be named in the write up of the survey results. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions you consider sensitive in nature. If the questionnaire is returned it will be assumed that consent has been given to use the information for my study.

I am doing this study under the supervision of Dr. Hillel Goelman and Dr. Marilyn Chapman of the Faculty of Education at UBC. If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Goelman at 822-6502 or myself at 869-9904. Thank you for your time and cooperation in participating in this survey.

Sincerely,

Judy Guthrie

APPENDIX B: PARENT SURVEY AND COVERING LETTER

PARENT SURVEY OF PRIMARY MIXED-AGE CLASSES

1. How many years has your child been enrolled in a mixed-age classroom?_____

2. What age group in mixed-year classes do you feel benefits most from this organization?

   older children___ younger children___

   both groups of children ___ neither group___

   Why?_____

3. Which group do you feel might be at a disadvantage in a primary mixed-age class.

   older children___ younger children___

   both groups of children ____ neither group___

   Why?_____

4. Which of the following classroom organizations would you prefer for your child.

   ___ year 1-2 (former K/gr.1)
   ___ year 1-2-3 (former gr.K/1/2)
   ___ " 2-3 (former gr.1/2)
   ___ " 2-3-4 (former gr.1/2/3)
   ___ " 3-4 (former gr.2/3)
   ___ " 1-2-3-4 (former gr.K/1/2/3)

5. What curriculum\educational areas do you feel your child would benefit from most in a mixed age class?

   Language Arts___ Physical Development___
   Socials/Science___ Math___
   Fine Arts___
   Social/Emotional Development___
   Other_____

6. What curriculum\educational area do you feel your child may have difficulties with in a mixed age class?

Language Arts___ Physical Development___
Socials/Science___ Math___
Fine Arts___
Social/Emotional Development___
Other_____

7. Do you feel the older children are good role models in a mixed-age class?
YES___ NO___
Comments_____

_____

_____

8. Some teachers believe that keeping students for more than one year has advantages. Do you agree or disagree with this statement.
AGREE___ DISAGREE___

Comments_____

_____

9. In your opinion what are the THREE MOST IMPORTANT BENEFITS for your child in mixed-age classes.

1._____

2._____

3._____

10. Do you have any concerns for your child in a mixed-age class?

_____

_____

_____

11. Who helped you to understand the reasons for moving to mixed-age classes.

District Staff___
School Principal___
Your child's teacher____
No one___
Other_____

12. If given a choice would you have your child/children continue in a primary mixed-age class? YES___ NO___

WHY?_____

_____

Centre for the Study of
Curriculum and Instruction
Faculty of Education
Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6T 1Z4
Tel: (604) 822-6502
Fax:(604) 822-8234

Dear Parents,

RE: PARENT SURVEY OF MIXED-AGE CLASSES

As part of the requirements of my Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education I am conducting this survey on mixed-age grouping. The purpose of the project is to gather information that will improve understanding of mixed-age grouping and help with the continued implementation of mixed-age classes. To succeed in this task it is important to obtain your views on mixed-age grouping. I ask that you take a few minutes to fill our the enclosed questionnaire.

Be assured that your responses to the questionnaire are confidential. The questionnaire contains no identifiable personal information and the school districts will not be named in the write up or survey results. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may refuse to answer any questions you consider sensitive in nature. If the questionnaire is returned it will be assumed that consent has been given to use the information for my study.

I am doing this study under the supervision of Dr. Hillel Goelman and Dr. Marilyn Chapman of the Faculty of Education at UBC. If you have any questions, please call Dr. Goelman at 822-6502 or myself at 869-9904. Thank you for your time and cooperation in participating in this survey.

Sincerely,

Judy Guthrie

APPENDIX C: TABLES FOR TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

Table C-1

Implementation Goals For Restructuring to Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N = 24	DISTRICT B N = 20	COMBINED N = 44
yes	6	12	18
no	14	7	21
undecided	3	1	4
no response	1	0	1

Table C-2

Staff Involvement In Implementation of Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N = 24	DISTRICT B N = 20	COMBINED N = 44
great deal	7	16	13
somewhat	6	0	6
a little	4	0	4
not at all	4	0	4
no response	3	4	7

Table C-3

Teachers' Opinions On the Move to Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=24	DIST.B N=20	COMB. N=44
Year 2000/Primary Prog.	2	7	9
continuous progress	4	6	10
helps break away from curriculum driven program	1	3	4
secure environment	2	1	3
experience different ages	3	0	3
children learn from each other	2	0	2

Note. A compilation of anecdotal comments

Table C-4

Benefits of Teaching Children More Than One Year

	DIST.A N = 24	DIST.B N = 20	COMB. N = 44
continuous progress	10	13	23
children know expectations	7	9	14
rapport established	5	6	13
waste no time in Sept.	2	5	7
parent relation established	0	2	2
must look at children individually	0	2	2

Note. Compilation of anecdotal comments.

Table C-5

Teachers' Preferences for Age Span in Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N=24	DISTRICT B N=20	COMBINED N=44
Dual Year			
Year 1/2	12	7	19
Year 2/3	10	10	20
Year 3/4	10	8	18
Multi Year			
Year 1/2/3	2	4	6
Year 2/3/4	1	4	5
Yr. 1/2/3/4	2	1	3

Note. Choices were not mutually exclusive.

Table C-6

Problems Identified by Teachers Enrolling Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N = 24	DIST.B N = 20	COMB. N = 44
not different from same-age	0	3	3
less student/teacher time	2	0	2
individual needs	0	3	3
can't think of any	2	0	2

Note. Compilation of anecdotal comments.

Table C-7

Problems Identified by Teachers Not Enrolling Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N = 24	DIST.B N = 20	COMB. N = 44
meeting individual needs	4	0	4
neither group feeling threatened/inadequate	3	0	3
not challenging capable	0	3	3
younger less likely to be leaders	0	2	2

Note. Compilation of anecdotal comments.

Table C-8

Children's Work/Play Preferences in Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=24	DIST.B N=20	COMB. N=44
prefer mixed-age groups	2	2	4
prefer same-age groups	0	2	2
balance of mixed-age and same-age	14	15	29
other	3	3	6
no response	5	0	5

Note. Answers were not mutually exclusive.

Table C-9

Areas of Concern for Teaching Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A	DIST.B	COMB.
characteristics of learners	80	64	144
methods/practice	70	50	120
curriculum	64	42	106
content/subject	66	35	101
other	13	14	27

Note. The first choice was weighted at 5, the last

Table C-10

Curriculum Concerns for Teaching Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N = 24	DISTRICT B N = 20	COMBINED N = 44
math	13	10	23
reading	6	3	9
language arts	5	0	5
science	0	5	5
writing	3	0	3
none	0	3	3

Note. Compilation of anecdotal comments

Table C-11

Reasons For Teaching Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=24	DIST.B N=20	COMB. N=44
trying something new	121	97	218
personal philosophy	89	97	196
learning new teaching strategies	93	86	179
networking with colleagues	79	79	158
school policy	56	78	134
frustration with graded model	53	68	121
district policy	32	42	74
other	60	11	71
university courses	30	39	69

Note. The first choice was weighted at 8, the last choice at 1.

Table C-12

Experiences that Influence the Quality of Teaching in Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N = 24	DIST.B N = 20	COMB. N = 44
inservice	98	85	183
knowledge of child development	89	86	175
preservice practicum	76	92	168
professional development	89	69	158
primary education	75	74	149
liberal arts education	37	38	75
other	29	14	43

Note. First choice was weighted at 6, last choice at 1.

Table C-13

District or School Initiatives That Facilitate Change to Mixed-age Grouping

	DIST.A N = 24	DIST.B N = 20	COMB. N = 44
visitations	9	8	17
networking	8	7	15
inservice	8	5	13
lower class size	7	3	10
resources	6	4	10
Helping Teacher	5	4	9
Parent education	3	2	5
Funding	5	0	5
Pro D	0	4	4
Leadership	4	0	4
time	0	4	4
teacher's decision	3	0	3
workshops supporting philosophy	0	2	2

Note. A compilation of anecdotal comments.

Table C-14

Institutions Where Teachers Received Their Training

	DISTRICT A N = 24	DISTRICT B N = 20	COMBINED N = 44
UBC	12	8	20
SFU	6	8	14
U of A	2	0	2
Other	3	3	6
No response	1	1	2

Table C-15

Teachers Enrolling Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N = 13	DISTRICT B N = 16	COMBINED N = 29
UBC	6	5	11
SFU	3	9	12
U of A	2	0	2
Other	2	2	4

Table C-16

When Teachers Degrees Were Completed

	DISTRICT A N = 24	DISTRICT B N = 20	COMBINED N = 44
1990-92	2	2	4
1980-89	8	8	16
1970-79	7	5	12
1960-69	1	1	2
not complete	5	4	9
no response	1	0	1

Table C-17

Teachers' Average Years of Experience

	DISTRICT A N = 24	DISTRICT B N = 20	COMBINED N = 44
Teaching M-A years of experience	15	14.2	14.6
Not Teaching M-A years of experience	14.5	14	14.2

Note. M-A (Mixed-age)

Table C-18

Time Line for Implementation of Goals for Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N = 24	DISTRICT B N = 20	COMBINED N = 44
yes	0	2	2
no	21	8	29
other	0	5	5
no response	3	5	8

Table C-19

Restructuring to Mixed-age Classes Included:

	DISTRICT A	DISTRICT B	COMBINED
all staff	6	7	13
most staff	2	7	9
some staff	12	3	15
no staff	0	0	0
no response	3	3	6

Table C-20

Considerations for Mixed-age Class Structure

	DIST.A N=24	DIST.B N=20	COMB. N=44
special needs/behavior	11	9	20
balance	7	5	12
gender	6	6	12
friendship	0	7	7
compatibility	2	0	2

Note. A compilation of anecdotal comments.

Table C-21

Groups Benefiting From Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N=24	DISTRICT B N=20	COMBINED N=44
older	1	0	1
younger	3	4	7
both groups	14	14	28
neither	2	2	4
no response	4	0	4

Table C-22

Groups Disadvantaged by Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N = 24	DISTRICT B N = 20	COMBINED N = 44
older	3	1	4
younger	0	2	2
both groups	5	0	5
neither	13	16	29
no reponse	3	1	4

Table C-23

Benefits for Children in Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=24	DIST.B N=20	COMB. N=44
continuous progress	8	8	16
older role models	6	8	14
learning from each other	7	0	7
family atmosphere	7	0	7
leadership skills	3	3	6
range/variety of skills	2	4	6
cooperative learning	4	2	6
2 yrs. with teacher	5	0	5
self esteem	2	3	5
learning by teaching	5	0	5
acceptance of differences	0	3	3
better social relations at school	2	0	2

Note. A compilation of anecdotal comments.

Table C-24

How Mixed-age Grouping Facilitates Cooperative Learning

	DIST.A N = 24	DIST.B N = 20	COMB. N = 44
great deal	13	18	31
somewhat	2	1	3
a little	0	1	1
not at all	5	0	5
no response	4	0	4

Table C-25

How Mixed-age Grouping Facilitates Peer Tutoring

	DIST.A N = 24	DIST.B N = 20	COMB. N = 44
great deal	10	13	23
somewhat	6	2	8
a little	1	0	1
not at all	3	0	3
no response	4	5	9

Table C-26

Teachers' Perceptions of Competitiveness In Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N=24	DISTRICT B N=20	COMBINED N=44
more	1	0	1
less	15	10	25
same	4	3	7
not certain	4	5	9
no response	0	2	2

Table C-27

Responses to Discipline by Teachers Enrolling a Mixed-age Class

	DISTRICT A N=13	DISTRICT B N=16	COMBINED N=29
same	11	10	21
2nd year students help	2	2	4
easier, younger emulate older	0	2	2
other	5	4	9

Note. A compilation of anecdotal comments.

Table C-28

Responses to Discipline by Teachers Not Enrolling a Mixed-age Class

	DISTRICT A N = 11	DISTRICT B N = 4	COMBINED N = 15
same	4	0	4
other	3	0	3
no response	4	0	4

Table C-29

The Importance of Teacher Education Programs as Preparations for Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N = 23	DISTRICT B N = 20	COMBINED N = 44
not at all	12	11	23
very little	3	6	9
somewhat	3	2	5
other	1	0	1
no response	4	1	5

Table C-30

Advantages of Keeping Students for More than One Year

	DIST.A 24 resp.	DIST.B 20 resp.	COMB. 44 resp.
agree	19	18	37
disagree	4	0	4
agree/disagree	1	2	3

Note. A compilation of anecdotal comments.

Table C-31

Where Teachers Learned about Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=24	DIST.B N=20	COMB. N=44
Primary Prog. Document	14	14	28
professional reading	10	13	23
practical experience	16	16	32
Inservice	6	5	11
Professional Development	10	9	19
Other	4	2	6

Note. Answers were not mutually exclusive.

Table C-32

Ideal Qualities for Teachers of Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=24	DIST.B N=20	COMB. N=44
knowledge of child development	7	3	10
flexibility	3	6	9
patience	5	4	9
love children	3	6	9
knowledge of Year 2000	5	0	5
energy	4	0	4
enthusiasm for concept	4	0	4
understand continuous progress	3	0	3
organized	0	3	3
open minded	3	0	3
experience at all grade levels	0	3	3
humor	2	0	2
knowledge of learning styles	0	2	2
cooperative learning	0	2	2
love of learning	0	2	2

Note. A compilation of anecdotal responses.

Table C-33

Survey Demographic Information

	DIST.A	DIST.B	COMB.
student population	1,565	14,984	16549
teachers in district	88	878	966
teachers participating in survey	32	32	64
teacher survey returns	24	20	44
parents participating in survey	43	49	92
parent survey returns	19	22	41

APPENDIX D: TABLES FOR PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Table D-1

Groups Benefiting from Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N=19	DISTRICT B N=22	COMBINED N=41
older	3	1	4
younger	5	9	14
both	9	9	18
neither	2	3	5

Note. Choices were not mutually exclusive

Table D-2

Curriculum and Educational Areas Children Benefit from in Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=19	DIST.B N=22	COMB. N=41
social/emotional growth	15	16	31
language arts	13	11	24
math	8	11	19
socials/science	8	6	14
fine arts	6	7	13
physical development	6	7	13

other	0	0	0

Note. Answers were not mutally exclusive.

Table D-3

Curriculum and Educational Areas Children May Be Disadvantaged by in Mixed-age Grouping

	DIST.A N=19	DIST.B N=22	COMB. N=41
math	5	5	10
social/emotional growth	4	6	10
physical development	2	7	9
language arts	2	6	8
socials/science	2	3	5
fine arts	1	3	4
other (none)	2	0	2

Note. Answers were not mutually exclusive.

Table D-4

Groups Disadvantaged by Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N=19	DISTRICT B N=22	COMBINED N=41
older	5	9	14
younger	1	1	2
both	1	4	5
neither	9	8	17
no response	3	0	3

Table D-5

Number of Years Children Enrolled in Mixed-age Classes

	DISTRICT A N=19	DISTRICT B N=22	COMBIN N=41
1 year	9	17	26
2 years	8	4	12
3 years	2	1	3

Table D-6

Parent Preferences for Mixed-age Configurations

	DISTRICT A N=19	DISTRICT B N=22	COMBINED N=41
year 1/2	7	3	10
year 2/3	10	10	20
year 3/4	11	11	22
year 1/2/3	2	1	3
year 2/3/4	3	0	3
yr.1/2/3/4	1	1	2

Note. Choices were not mutually exclusive

Table D-7

Perceptions of Older Children as Role Models in Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=19	DIST.B N=22	COMB. N=41
yes	15	15	30
no	3	3	6
no response	1	4	5

Table D-8

Children Staying With the Same Teacher for More than One Year

	DIST.A N=19	DIST.B N=22	COMB. N=41
agree	13	18	31
disagree	3	3	6
no response	3	1	4

Table D-9

Benefits for Children in Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=19	DIST.B N=22	COMB. N=41
role modelling/working with peers	24	21	45
social/emotional devel.	11	12	23

Note. A compilation of anecdotal comments

Table D-10

Concerns for Children in Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=19	DIST.B N=22	COMB. N=41
no concerns	3	7	10
worries about teachers abilities/committment	4	3	7
older not being challenged enough	2	3	5
unrealistic expectations for younger	2	2	4

Note. A compilations of anecdotal comments

Table D-11

Who Helped Parents Understand Mixed-age Philosophy

	DIST.A N=19	DIST.B N=22	COMB. N=41
no one	8	11	19
teacher	5	10	15
principal	2	7	9
district staff	4	2	6
other	2	2	4

Note. Answers were not mutually exclusive.

Table D-12

Parents' Choices for Future Enrollment in Mixed-age Classes

	DIST.A N=19	DIST.B N=22	COMB. N=41
yes	12	8	20
no	4	8	12
no response	3	4	7

APPENDIX E: ANECDOTAL COMMENTS FROM TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Implementation Goals for Restructuring (5)*

1.1 District A Teacher Comments

- no response
- we don't all want mixed age!
- Usually any one who wants to may teach it; not everyone is pushed into it; the teacher has to feel comfortable.
- not for a total nongradedness
- no response
- no response
- K-1, 1-2, 2-3
- This structure is encouraged but not forced.
- no response
- Some are nongraded but one age: several are nongraded mixed-age; continuous progress is a goal area for next year.
- no response
- no response
- no response
- no response
- no response
- no response
- no response
- we do this naturally because of numbers; next year we hope to instigate a primary class K-1 with 1.5 teachers.
- no response
- no response
- no response
- no response
- primary 2/3, primary 3/4, intermediate 4/5
- all primary except for year 1 as of Sept. 19992

* The number in the parenthesis corresponds to the question on the Teacher Questionnaire.

1.2 District B Teacher Comments

- no response
- Each primary teacher has a mixed-age grouping (heterogeneous); teachers keep students for two years; much care and consideration goes into the placement of students
- I don't remember any specific goals but at placement meetings after a year of meeting, studying the program, 2 years ago and ever since, it is just generally accepted that we divide groups into early and late primary with 2 age levels in each.
- It's already been implemented.
- no response
- unknown to me
- I think the goals and plans are informal and not articulated. We are experimenting as we go. We all have multi-age classrooms. We decided that after we spent a year of observing multi-age classrooms and reading and discussing. We meet every month to discuss and plan as a group.
- No specific goals that I am aware of. We just do it. We discuss it at Primary Staff Meetings.
- Go slowly, 2 age levels to start; change school jargon and parents from grades to ages, ie "I'm in grade 2 to I'm 7".
- this has already been completed: mixed-age groupings have been here for 4 years.
- we are mostly mixed-age now
- those that wished to participate were given opportunity; giving inservice to parents; inservice for teachers as well
- We decided as a staff two years ago to implement dual-age classes. Things could change as a result of new staffing for the 1992-93 school year.
- Do it! A staff decision.
- no response
- collaboration between classrooms for co-teaching units; purchase of more/pooling of resources ie math manipulatives, reading material; exchange desks for flat tops for flexible room arrangements
- no response
- no response
- multi-age special activities; meeting needs of individual children (not groups of children)
- no response

2. Affects of Implementation on Staffs (9)

2.1 District A Teacher Comments

- It has seemed to caused a lot of stress, I feel there is a lack of acceptance for differing teaching styles.
- Because some do and others do not, class organization is skewed for so-called "straight graded" classes.
- divided the group, caused conflict.
- caused a great rift between the staff
- a lot of strife
- made division--two philosophies exist and clash
- some favor it, others don't
- caused resentment and hostility when people who were teaching mixed-age were given more money than others
- It has caused some animosity among those who are enthusiastic about change and those who are not.
- Even those not doing mixed-age have taken on the nongraded approach.
- It has divided the staff (Us and Them Perception by many). Has added extra tension to staff relations.
- Three quarter of classes are nongraded mixed-age. These are by choice
- Three out of four classes. Where it was by choice very positively, where it was forced, negatively.
- Those who chose to move to mixed-age grouping have enjoyed doing so.
- Where there is choice--positive. Where there is no choice--negative.
- no response
- not at all
- We have great deal of staff unity because of this; we all feel as if we are in this together; our success are shared; it has promoted more staff interaction and appreciation for each others gifts, talents and abilities
- no response
- N/A, forces multiage/multigrade if one person wants to try it--so far this has not been the reason for multiage
- Some are in favor and are trying it and some are against it
- no response
- some like it, others do no, would prefer a one grade level class
- some like it; some do not.

2.2 District B Teacher Comments

- Generally it has had a positive influence. I find I am more aware of what is happening in more classrooms as there are more of us teaching the same age level. Our classes do more activities together and we share more ideas.
- teaching styles and strategies had to change. Resources were required.

- We have more to share, there is common interests among late primary teachers and among early primary teachers. Most teachers still view their situation as a split class.
- anger/confusion as schoolboard administration insisted we partake in testing on nationwide scale that used "grades"!
- Some like it, some don't.
- no response
- We talk more, about our concerns, about what it is we do differently, about what we like better.
- We have difficulty with intermediate and specialist teachers referring to the children by grades (also substitutes). Some seem unwilling to change to using age levels as a term of reference.
- Some are always reluctant to change and resist because they prefer more definite guidelines for reporting on kids. Most of us were already teaching with this philosophy and LOVE that it's mandated now.
- More communication between teachers and primary and intermediate.
- We came to a consensus as a staff and have worked together to implement it.
- unified us / lots of collaboration / sharing sessions / lots of teaming of classes, mutual respect for variety of teaching styles
- Some staff members are sold on dual-age classes, others would prefer single age groupings again. I'm sold on dual-age classes.
- Most are happy -- others don't see benefits.
- united us so that we became a far more collaborative group
- sense of sharing -- equipment, facilities, concerns, teaching strategies.
- N/A
- N/A
- more cooperative activities, more collaboration between teachers
- no response

3. Reasons for the Move to Mixed-age Grouping (11)

3.1 District A Teacher Comments

- No class of "straight" grades had a finite ability range anyhow. The mixed-ages show ability (and disability) transcend age.
- I sense a pressure that without doing multiage groupings the "year 2000" approach can not happen.
- Older students being models for the younger ones.
- Some people feel it's better for children--I don't agree.
- an attempt to offer a greater range of opportunities and challenges to students
- More child-centered learning--ties to the philosophy of mixed-age

- Year 2000, class sizes, philosophical considerations, educational considerations.
- to force teachers to view continuous progress seriously (for probably the same reason dual entry was forced on the province
- To better facilitate the fact that children develop at different rates and that they should be in an environment that encourages those differences
- It is part of the Year 2000 for one. It also creates a better climate for learners and helpers with a bigger age spread.
- In our school it was (1) The push from teachers who are sold on the philosophy. (2) Administration number crunching to fit children into 'X' number of classes. (3) Teachers willing to take a risk
- to provide experiences of different age and social groups
- to give kids a chance to experience different groups-to have the benefit of having different ages in the class
- to allow for some change within classes of children which often stay together from K-12. In a small school settings allows for a change of social groups and a more even distribution of behavior problems.
- to experience different age and social groups
- no response
- small school-arrange classes according to population changes
- we have always had mixed ages at this school
- Older students can help the younger students, and thus solidify what they already know. Younger students have example and knowledge of the older students to draw on.
- numbers; social interaction problems separated
- children learn from each other and teach each other
- class size and structure
- In intermediate class size and number of special needs children in the class have effected the change to mixed-age grouping.
- Small school, mainly class size numbers

3.2 District B Teacher Comments

- Year 2000 - Primary Program basically - also mixed-age groups facilitate cooperative learning, peer tutoring etc. and helps to eliminate the stereotypes of "low grade 2's" or "bright grade 2's". Children are allowed to progress at their own rate.
- Fits with the goals of the new Primary Document. Forces teachers to implement more open-ended teaching strategies
- To conform to the philosophy of the Year 2000 curriculum.
- Year 2000 Document
- Suggested by Primary Document
- bandwagon effect, belief that it will benefit most, strong push from a few

- It's more natural. I have a late primary/early intermediate class, those who need more time with the primary program can have it before entering the intermediate program. We all help each other.
- It is the best for kids! All feel success at their level and acceptance of others. Everyone shines at something.
- It's a more natural way to group based on (incomplete response)
- Progressive thinking and trends; a belief that it's better for kids.
- Every student in our school has unique individual needs. We feel these needs can often be best met in a mixed-age grouping.
- continuous progress / Year 200 / modelling / remediation without embarrassment
- Children learn at their won rate. Mixed-age grouping fits with the philosophy of the Primary Program. I'm all for it!
- Older groups models behavior expectations and reading behaviors. Helps teachers break away from curriculum driven programs.
- to allow children to move at a developmentally appropriate level, in a safe secure environment; to allow children to "help each other and learn from each other"
- Interest on behalf of teachers - a sense that if you believe in continuous progress it should 'work'.
- emphasis on individual learning
- N/A
- teacher preference and children's needs
- less emphasis upon artificial expectations > emphasis upon individual learners

4. Which Group Benefits from Mixed-age and Why (13)

4.1 <u>District A Teacher Comments</u>

- both groups; older children can lead, younger children can learn respect for all ages
- both groups; each has an important role that require different skills
- both groups; younger ones have someone to look up to, older ones get a chance to be "models" and helpers
- both groups; because it facilitates individual learning styles and different rates of development
- both groups; It depends - I only have experience with Year 1-2. I feel both groups benefit from that structure but I think that other combinations could have opposite results.
- both groups; In practice these are always mixed ages (mental) and abilities.
- both groups; no response
- older group; Younger notice more the difference between their abilities and that of the older children
- younger group; the older children set the examples

- neither group; huge span of abilities and too many special needs
- no response; Depends on dynamics of each group.
- both groups; there appears to be a more cooperative spirit in the classroom
- both groups; Benefits for older kids of being leaders and younger of having peer support
- younger group; interest levels the same
- neither group; less teacher time for each group
- neither group; no response
- both groups; Older students can help younger students, and thus solidify what they already know. Younger students have example and knowledge of the older students to draw on.
- both groups; all children benefit from learning from or helping peers to learn
- younger group; Younger children have models to watch and to strive towards in both work progress and behavior
- both groups; the older children learn by teaching and can fill in learning gaps when with younger children
- both groups; both learn from each other, more cooperative and considerate
- both groups; Older children re-enforce their skills when they have to help a younger child. Younger children learn better when taught by their peers.
- both groups/neither group; It depends on individual students and teacher perceptions.
- younger group; Learn routines with more ease from their older buddies.

4.2 District B Teacher Comments

- both groups; differing roles raise self-esteem
- both groups; Modelling and teaching help reinforce learning of older children. Older children motivate younger ones.
- both groups; younger students benefit from modelling, older students benefit from helping/working with younger
- both groups; Age has nothing to do with it, those who can help those who can't.
- both groups; children learn at different rates. Older develop responsibility, younger have a buddy.
- both groups; Fosters a more cooperative, caring environment.
- younger group; no response
- younger group; peer tutoring, role models of older students
- neither group; no response
- no response; No basis for proof.
- both groups; see that everyone has a range of strengths a and challenges and as a group we can help and be helped as a normal interaction
- both groups; both groups are exposed to the whole spectrum and allowed to go as far as they can

- both groups; Mixed-age grouping allows for flexibility. You focus on social, emotional and intellectual growth. Children learn with and from others.
- both groups; enrichment / remediation and continuous progress / buddying / family atmosphere
- younger group; (have only worked with these) from P1-P4 they are given time to see and work in a holistic program
- younger group; no response
- both groups; age is not most critical factor in Primary
- both groups; children learn from each other
- both groups; no response
- both groups; age not a factor

5. Which Groups are Disadvantaged and Why (14)

5.1 District A Teacher Comments

- neither group; younger become older in Year 2
- neither group; except if one group is always the older or always the younger
- neither group; there is much to be learned from being a cooperative group worker and from being the older and younger members
- neither group; many reasons - range too great, numbers of students too high, not independent workers, not enough repetition for some, too much for others
- neither group; the older serve as models for the younger, the younger learn from their peers
- neither group; depends on children and class make up
- older group; used as teachers too often
- older group; no one (other than the teacher) to look up to
- both groups; There is too great a difference in abilities in a single age let alone several ages and classes are getting more and more problems.
- both groups; no response
- no response; I don't think we can generalize.
- neither group; there appears to be a more cooperative spirit in the classroom
- neither group; Benefits for older kids of being leader and younger of having peer support.
- N/A
- both groups; less teacher time for each group
- both groups; no response
- neither group; no response
- older group; Younger-based activities might be boring. Older students don't have an older model to copy or work ahead with like the younger ones do.
- no response; I feel children who come from a low stimulation environment are at a distinct disadvantage with all Year 2000 activities.
- neither group; there are so many advantages
- no response

- neither group; as long as older children are provided with opportunity to be challenged
- neither group; it depends on individual students and teacher perception
- neither group; all learning from each other to best of their ability

5.2 District B Teacher Comments

- neither group; no response
- neither group; no response
- neither group; no response
- neither group; no response
- neither group; Younger children benefit from the mature role models of the older students and from their knowledge, older children benefit from the extra practice or reinforcement of skills through peer tutoring.
- neither group; Again age has nothing to do with it. Some of the younger kids can do things that older kids can't and vice versa. Learning is a continuum. It's not age relate.
- neither group; Each group experiences being the younger and the older group in a two year cycle.
- younger group; no response
- older group; sometimes
- no response
- neither group; All groups of 26-30 children have those who excel and those who are challenged. This is very realistic.
- neither group; Both groups are exposed to the whole spectrum and allowed to go as far as they can.
- neither group; no response
- neither group; no response
- neither group; no response
- younger group; (ie early primary, 6 year olds) It was difficult to find time to give them the very early "stuff" they needed for reading, printing, etc.
- neither group; no response
- neither group; no response
- neither group; no response
- neither group; no response

6. Mixed-age and Cooperative Learning (18)

6.1 District A Teacher Comments

- a great deal; Cooperative learning requires different roles to be taken and some ages can take on leadership roles or learn to subside and allow others the opportunity

- a great deal; no response
- a great deal; students have opportunities to take on leadership roles as well as be group members. Removes the element of competition to a large extent.
- a great deal; It establishes the spirit of cooperation, the understanding of sharing knowledge and experiences which establishes a common ground with a view toward a common goal.
- a great deal; The age span lends itself to producing leaders, organizers.
- a great deal; no response
- no response; Dependent on class make-up, leaders and listeners needed. I feel same as single aged class.
- not at all; no response
- not at all; Cooperative learning can be done in a single age group or a multi-age group with big buddies or little buddies - it is a teaching style not age related.
- not at all; it depends - the teacher has to teach and reinforce to social structures and the material has to be appropriate. Mixed-age doesn't make it easier or harder.
- not at all; (no more than any other class) I don't think this facilitates cooperative learning more than a straight age class. I think it depends upon the training the students get to use cooperative learning. Skills must be taught
- a great deal; more of a "buddy" system can be used with mixed-age groupings
- a great deal; because the older ones want to help the younger
- a great deal; no response
- not at all; no response
- no response
- a great deal; children are natural teachers
- somewhat; All classes can initiate cooperative learning, they don't have to be mixed-age.
- somewhat; older students act as teachers - reimpresses their own learning, interaction with each other is very positive
- a great deal; The teacher is forced away from whole class teaching and can see the benefit of letting the students challenge and encourage each other.
- a great deal; In younger grades especially you have some "expert" leaders.
- a great deal; In primary classes older children relate well towards younger children, especially doing buddy reading, strategies, center times.
- a great deal; Nonreaders can readily be read to by 'older' reading buddy.
- somewhat/not at all; may become a new director rather than cooperative model

6.2 District B Teacher Comments

- a great deal; social skills/differences are more accepted
- a great deal; Some older children are natural teachers and love to work with younger ones. Younger ones cooperate more with older children because they look up to them.
- a great deal; range of abilities / background knowledge
- a great deal; We do lots of group work. Cooperative learning is a big part of my class.
- a great deal; Children help each other a lot more.
- a great deal; We all help and care about each other.
- a great deal; Children develop a greater appreciation of those who have different abilities, they learn to work "cooperatively".
- a great deal; Older students are more patient of younger students than of their peers
- somewhat; Older (more experienced children) working with younger ones
- a little; no response
- a great deal; facilitate each others learning, group work
- a great deal; Younger children can use older children as role models, but older children learn to appreciate the great ideas and strengths of younger buddies.
- a great deal; obvious opportunities for sharingknowledge and receiving assistance
- a great deal; no response
- a great deal; Older ones act as mentors, examples, scribes, but younger ones get to give ideas, display thinking, hear older ideas, work with specific roles etc.
- somewhat; I would use it regardless.
- a great deal; Different children see that they have different abilities required for group projects.
- a great deal; less children are at same stage of development
- a great deal; It forces children to cooperate and help each other.
- a great deal; forces children to help each other

7. Mixed-age and Peer Tutoring (19)

7.1 District A Teacher Comments

- no response
- a great deal; "class experts" can be used, buddy reading
- a great deal; Students are encouraged to rely on themselves and their peers and the range of ages facilitates this attitude.
- a great deal; The older can help the younger and less knowledgeable
- a great deal; Older kids generally have greater skills than younger ones
- somewhat; The younger children get a lot of help

- somewhat; Older students could help younger students
- a little; no response
- not at all; Just because you're older doesn't mean you have the desire or ability to teach someone younger. It isn't a panacea.
- not at all; This is not dependent on age but training and ability.
- no response; Dependent on class make-up, leaders and listeners needed. I feel same as single age class.
- a great deal; Once again, the older students (or those working ahead) enjoy tutoring the other students.
- a great deal; Some kids have already learned material or just more mastery.
- a great deal; no response
- not at all; no response
- no response
- a great deal; no response
- a great deal; Older (or more able) students can read etc. to younger
- somewhat; no response
- a great deal; The younger children will naturally go to the older children for help when the teacher is busy, and they will pass on what they have learned more readily.
- somewhat; The younger members have older peers to look up to and gain expertise from.
- somewhat; Nonreaders really aid readers. Lots of mimicking.
- somewhat; May or may not seek assistance just because of age difference.
- no response; I don't know.

7.2 District B Teacher Comments

- a great deal; It becomes a necessity with so many levels of skill development.
- a great deal; Need older to help
- a great deal; With a wide age range there's often a wider range of abilities and it's difficult to give all the children the one to one they need, so there's lots of opportunity for peer tutoring.
- a great deal; It's just a natural solution to time constraints and provides an opportunity for students to show what they know by teaching.
- somewhat; no response
- somewhat; Older (more experienced children) working with younger
- no response; ? Kids or teachers?
- no response
- no response; Not sure
- no response; ?
- a great deal; Those who are capable assist those who are challenged regardless of the nature of the process or task.
- a great deal; no response

- a great deal; no response
- a great deal; no response
- a great deal; Buddy reading / Strategy partners / Scribes in writing, etc.
- somewhat; Those who want to have the opportunity, it's not a set program
- a great deal; Children with greater skills feel comfortable in sharing them.
- a great deal; Older children model peer tutoring as they are more mature.
- a great deal; The teacher might be engaged in teaching another group and not be available.
- a great deal; Children feel comfortable sharing

8. Keeping Students More Than One Year (23)

8.1 District A Teacher Comments

- agree; younger children become the older ones and are more used to classroom routines and techniques
- agree; A teacher is able to get a clearer picture of the child which can help to see how much a child has truly developed. A rapport has been built in the 1st year that can continue. A child's self esteem often grows because of the bond.
- agree; because the teacher is more aware of the progress each child has made over a longer period of time. Helps the children gain confidence because they are familiar with the situation.
- agree; You know how far they got last year and can continue from there. You can also build relationships with the home that last longer.
- agree; Many of the established rules are passed on by last year's students
- agree; You get to know those students well and know what you have taught them.
- agree; I think it increases the teacher's sense of responsibility towards the child's learning and growth in all areas. Provides security for some children. You don't waste any time in Sept. "getting to know them". Helps very much in continuous progress.
- agree; You know where the child is at and with difficult children you may have worked out workable ways of dealing with the child and could achieve further progress the next year.
- agree/disagree; For part of the class this would be good to build on where we left off, for students who are behavioraly challenging, one year is enough for both student and teacher. It lets them have a new start.
- agree/disagree; Some children benefit from the continuity or security of established routines and patterns. Others need a change for various reasons, personality, teach (learning) style...
- agree/disagree; One gets to know students well and this means a head-start the 2nd year. Some students become too familiar and become discipline problems.

- agree; It is much easier for a child's learning to be continuous if the teacher is already familiar with child and routines are already in place.
- agree; Many children need two years to feel you reached them. Also provides kids who know your routine.
- agree; It takes some children longer to "get it", leaders show new ones routine.
- agree; Good improvement in skills noted.
- no response
- agree; You don't have to spend September establishing cooperative rules, discovering learning styles etc. Long range goals can be established. "Comfort zones" well established.
- agree; totally, I taught some students for 3 grades in ...One can see their progress, see what they retain from year to year, and build on their strengths. I feel very positive about this.
- disagree; Teacher has a wealth of info and expectations from year to year.
- agree; Because they know your routines and strategies and can teach them to the new group.
- agree; Because you have group who know your class rules and standards and they become your "teachers" for the incoming new students.
- agree; young children are familiar with the routines at the beginning of the 2nd year, builds self confidence and provides for a faster pace of growth and development.
- agree; definitely as child/teacher is comfortable from 1st day of school and teacher knows capabilities from day 1
- agree/disagree; for some students having new teachers each year is an important part of getting all you can from the system while others need the security of the same teacher

8.2 District B Teacher Comments

- agree; I know the children, their strengths and weaknesses; they know me and my expectations. They "train" the new ones.
- agree; know needs and achievements better, efficient programing
- agree; After one year with a student you can understand his/her needs and set objectives. A second year gives you more time to meet their needs. Less time is wasted "getting to know" the child. The child also feels comfortable from the start and knows your expectations in terms of behavior and academic standards.
- agree; Children know the routines and have a rapport established. The teacher gets to see more growth. Parents know expectations.
- agree; familiarity of routines 2nd year
- agree; totally, you start off where they left off. Away you go!

- agree; Yes!! As mentioned above, 2nd year students set tone for the year, show more responsibility, become the oldest rather than younger. I can count on them so the younger fall into place.
- agree/disagree; I think you have to look at every student and decide. For some students it is better to change.
- agree/disagree; It depends on the relationship between child and teacher, if a child works with a teacher a second year he/she can move ahead more readily because the child's knowledge, behavior is well known.
- agree/disagree; knowing where child is can be helpful, change can push a child to a more challenging area of learning.
- agree; September is less uncertain, routines easier to establish, expectations more quickly achieved.
- agree; Great advantages! Students know what to expect so there is no apprehension as a new year begins. You know your students strengths and areas that need improvement and can begin immediately to help students growth.
- agree; less time spent on child's part / teacher's part in becoming familiar with each other / teacher zeros in on needs right away / ** 2 years max
- agree; you know the students, where they are and what their needs are, they know you too
- agree; You know exactly where to start in Sept., which areas need reinforcing / how to motivate certain students / routines are set and older ones set an example.
- agree; Continuous progress then can really be the norm. You know where the child is --what has been covered and have a parent relationship established.
- agree; children are familiar with expectations
- agree; especially children who are upset by change
- agree; children are familiar with expectations
- agree/disagree; I have mixed feelings about this. It's nice to see their progress but yet I like to have new faces and challenges every year

9. Three Important Benefits For Children (16)

9.1 District A Teacher Comments

- all children learn they can be leaders; children learn from each other; play ground difficulties can be dissipated
- It forces the teacher to look at the children, where they are, not just as a single group of "Grade X" or "Year Y"; Children are exposed to wider range of skills, they may not obtain the skills but they can see where they're headed!; It tells children it's O.K. to interact with other ages much like they do in their on neighborhoods, school traditionally segregated ages so children that would play together at home didn't at school.

- role models; socialization skills; range of levels/stages
- Helping others (learning through teaching); Being able to work with older students who have better skills; More flexibility
- no response
- Haven't taught it
- I'm only speaking of year 1-2, more time to experienc in centers makes year 2 more enjoyable; year 2 good role models for year 1
- identification we are all different, we all learn at different rates; friendships not bound by age and grade; children teaching and learning other with, by other children
- modeling behavior of older kids for younger ones; children who need more time may get greater opportunity for practising
- no response
- pacing according to ability for the slow and high ability student
- ?
- no response
- sharing knowledge; cooperative learning; less competition
- ability to use leadership skills; cooperative learning; less competition
- more cooperative learning; chance for older students to be "leaders"; less competitiveness
- opportunity for peer teaching and learning; opportunity for partner work; opportunity to progress at own pace
- good for younger students, provided older can provide a suitable model; older students act as teachers
- reimpresses their own learning; interactions with each other is very positive
- role modelling; peer appreciation of different strengths regardless of age; learning how to receive a well as how to offer help in school as well as in social play
- can learn from more mature students; possibility of enrichment / slower pacing; competition
- quick learning of routines, rules; better cooperative groups; older children very comfortable with same teacher
- develops self esteem; develops self confidence; better social relationships in a school
- cooperative skills; social skills; educational skills
- children learn from each other; children learn by showing someone else; forces the teacher to work
- nongraded, children progress at their own pace

9.2 District B Teacher Comments

- possible for them to review / relearn / rehearse more; possible to learn more social skills; learn that people are different and unique

- not all children are expected to complete a set curriculum in a certain amount of time, they're allowed to learn at their own pace; Teacher are learning not to stereotype children because they aren't expecting them to all be the same now; It creates a more exciting environment for children because their "can-do" is celebrated and they see models all around them.
- learning from their peers / teaching peers; more variety in classroom; more stimulation
- more of a chance to work at your own level and speed; comfort in working with same teacher again; develops a sense of caring helping younger
- I think that mixed-age classes are more comfortable to work in - for kids and teachers; Older kids model for younger kids, they catch on faster.
- self esteem; same teacher (familiarity of routines) for 2 years
- modelling of other students / challenged; acceptance of others; more independent / responsible
- peer tutoring; role models; learning to work cooperatively
- older help younger; mellower tone
- staying with a teacher for two years (comfort); Opportunity for leadership - and a chance to develop a sense of responsibility to help each other; Allows for a more life like situation (family atmosphere)
- child centered; whole spectrum of primary years addressed; continuous progress
- lots of ways to get reinforcement, yet stretch in other areas; security in having teacher 2 years - no time lost in second year; building of self esteem as one works with another and helps others
- better opportunities to meet individual needs; cooperative learning
- enrichment / remediation and continuous progress; buddying (family atmosphere)
- Collaboration with others who are older and more experienced is less fearful for younger child; Acceptance of younger children - older children become guides for the younger children - feelings of importance; Development of friendships with older and younger classmates
- see everyone as learners; curriculum more open ended; less push for academic excellence and added concern for emotional growth
- older students can act as mentors to younger ones; lowers frustration level of younger students; raises self esteem in older students
- role models; raises self esteem; children teach children
- greater range of skills and knowledge; older children can help younger children; older children model cooperative skills
- role models; children teaching children; comparisons not possible

10. Three Serious Problems For Children (17)

10.1 District A Teacher Comments

- their parents fears
- parents who are not informed
- quieter students may find the situation intimidating at first; perhaps not as much teacher/student time
- accountability for each student's learning, will some coast?
- is all required work getting covered; a lot more work for teacher, therefore teacher tired
- Haven't taught it.
- teachers depend on students to learn from each other, but students aren't trained in communication skills or peer tutoring; L.D. kids are doomed, they need more structure and direct instruction; special needs students aren't being identified or given adequate, appropriate instruction.
- meeting individual needs with big class sizes; materials for "process teaching"
- dividing the teacher's time for ones who need extra help at all the differing levels
- no response
- I taught in a one room school grades 1-7 and never experienced problems or noted that it created problems for the student.
- Students who require extra assistance are being left behind; some students need direct teaching and do not 'discover'; students have the same teacher for more than one year.
- clashes between different groups; less teacher time for each group; possible academic regression (in larger classes)
- math has to be taught separately
- I find I still teach math separately
- ?
- children with learning difficulties require more structure; need for a quiet space for group teaching; large class size
- children need to learn to share; hard to test for skills - lots of subjectivity in a wide span, top students can be left unmotivated; older students may have a hard time "reaching higher"
- older students having to help too much; younger children not getting enough time for early "game/center" activities; Teachers limiting top end students to their "grade" while younger students get to work ahead.
- feeling inadequate because of greater span; developmentally different stages accentuated competition
- sometimes too much span
- children with personality clashes with the teacher should be moved after 1 year or before; children of parents who do not feel comfortable with the philosophy of the program should not be put in mixed-age grouping

- no response
- making sure that younger children don't feel threatened or that older children aren't threatened by younger high achiever

10.2 District B Teacher Comments

- ?
- Parents, A.O.'s, and other teachers sometimes still refer to grades and it confuses children; Teachers need smaller class size to plan for a wider variety of needs.
- younger, emotionally less mature student may try to impress older students with inappropriate behavior; youngerstudents feel they are deficient if they compare their skills to older students (sometimes); some students may never get enough practice and review of skills they need to progress (fall through the cracks)
- I like it so I can't think of any.
- the challenge is for the teacher - to have suitable materials and assessment strategies in place
- no response
- parents concerned their child will not be challenged and will behave immaturely by seeing younger students.
- sometimes the older more capable students aren't challenged enough; the variety of ability levels makes it harder to deal with individual learning difficulties or learning styles; very mature students don't have the same interests as the immature students
- in gym hard to program activities all can do, motor skill range too great from 3 year to 5 year span, either too easy or too hard
- planning activities where everyone succeeds; making sure that individual needs are met
- parent education, I believe they'd be supportive if more PR had been done before the change, this is the responsibility of the Provincial Government
- time alone with teacher; if age span is more than 2 years it is difficult to always focus on age appropriate literature etc.; inexperienced teachers have too much to handle and may miss needs of certain groups
- challenging older students; parental concerns
- I don't see any
- I see no serious problems for children in a primary mixed-age grouping that could not also occur in single age classes.
- enough time may not be available in early fall to provide assistance to those who are at the farthest range of ability, (but is this much different from a more homogeneous "group"?)
- older ones get too caught up in helping young; content not challenging enough for older students; younger ones a are sometimes lost
- younger children less likely to become leaders; content not challenging enough for older; older ones getting caught up in helping

- not enough physical space; parts of math hard to teach whole class
- children in year 1 need more open ended activities; childen in higher placing require more quiet; younger children less likely to become leaders

11. Discipline in Mixed-age Classes (21)

11.1 District A Teacher Comments

- Discipline was not a problem in my one room school experience. The younger age student tend to be somewhat intimidated by older students.
- Same as any other grouping with behavior problems, special needs and mixed abilities/interests.
- I would think - don't let older kids intimidate younger ones.
- Good models necessary - learning necessary how to function with internal structures and boundaries.
- I don't notice any difference.
- no response
- I don't believe the discipline should be anything different from a one age group.
- Because there is more freedom of movement and more talking it tends to be a referee's job for teachers. On the other hand since it is more child centered than teacher lecture, power struggles should be lessened.
- Younger children and older children seem to get along better together because the competitive aspect of learning is less.
- I found it the same as straight grade class.
- I think tolerance between the grades would be facilitated.
- discipline procedures are easier to put into place at the beginning of the year when you have a group that was with you the previous year, teaching (informing) others of class routines.
- works the same
- each child is treated the same
- Not necessarily harder to discipline depends on individual personalities.
- no response
- same as single age grouping
- discipline as usual, because of the nature of a mixed-age group I believe it is easier for children to be off task.
- Same discipline rules are applied to all age groups. Older children are often paired with younger to facilitate ease of instruction.
- no response
- Same as single age grouping unless you have a core group from a previous year who know the class rules and standards.
- Discouraged children are always a discipline problem in any type of classroom.
- much easier if you've had one group the previous year

- N/A - depends on students and motivations as per regular class

11.2 District B Teacher Comments

- No problem. Older children are good role models.
- harder as students with little self control are more likely to be far from appropriate skill level. Immature ones/younger stand out more. Older show off more.
- I think it's easier as the younger ones try to emulate the older students.
- The modelling of older students seems to encourage immature students to tow the line.
- no response
- The same as in same age. There are consequences to your behavior.
- Great - older model behavior for younger. Two year students guide first year as to class expectations.
- No different than in a single age group.
- no response
- Variety of means and ways are used.
- No different than any group of 26-30 children. Those multiage classes that have been built with at least 1/2 of the students already familiar with the teachers program/philosophy may have expectations come sooner.
- No different than in a single age class. Why would it be?
- No different than in a straight grade. Children are children.
- no response
- This year I have found that my young ones learn many "older" behaviors quite early.
- Same as always for me - clear expectations - consistency - fairness
- no response
- less problems with discipline
- Choice is always yours, make the right choice and enjoy it, make the wrong choice and accept it.
- Older children tend to be more responsible because they know the younger ones look to them for examples. The younger ones may ask the older for help in solving conflicts

12. Curriculum Concerns (27)

12.1 District A Teacher Comments

- P.E., computers, thinking skills
- no response
- language arts, arithmetic, science
- reading, writing, socializing
- arithmetic, initial reading acquisition
- mathematics

- arithmetic, reading
- mathematics, reading, writing
- reading, writing,
- socials, arithmetic, language arts
- L.A. (learning assistance), arithmetic, science
- no response
- reading, math
- math, language arts, socials
- math
- math (I find this the most difficult to arrange (set up) in mixed-age grouping. I teach math separately.)
- life skills, math, spelling
- Writing is the only concern I have! - how much to expect from each individual.
- language arts, math, social growth
- Fine Arts strand of Intellectual Development; Reporting of social/emotional areas; Augmenting / counselling within social/emotional areas
- no response
- fine arts
- reading, math, social sciences
- no response

12.2 District B Teacher Comments

- math, reading
- math, nonreaders who need lots of one-on one
- math, language (French Immersion) curriculum dictates older student (P4) have one hour of English a day
- math, socials, science
- I use themes just like I used to.
- no response
- math
- math - there's such a range of abilities. I have trouble meeting the needs of the very capable and those who are struggling; P.E. - the wide range of abilities makes it hard for everyone to be successful in the same ctivity. It seems many activities area either too easy or too difficult for the class as a whole.
- games, fitness, ballskills
- math
- science (possibly)
- I have only one - math because it is so sequential for me at this time.
-early reading (Year 2's) / math
- no response
- I am just as concerned about the curriculum areas when I teach a single primary class.

- no response
- language arts, math, science
- language arts, math, science/social studies
- math - regrouping
- reading instruction, writing, science

13. Teacher Training and Experience (28)

13.1 District A Teacher Comments

- (23) no response
- preservice practicum a long term internship

13.2 District B Teacher Comments

- (8) no response
- I found Simon Fraser University's P.D.P Program to be excellent! The practical experience was perfect.
- Experience in the classroom and lots of chances to work with and observe children is vital.
- (4) no response
- You learn best by trying - reflecting / reorganizing, trying and reflecting again - especially if you work with others and reflect together
- Any teacher who is currently involved in "single age" teachings sees a wide range of abilities (social, emotional and intellectual) with the students in their care. There's no great difference between single and dual age classes. The bottom line is you take the child from where [he] is to as far as you are able...
- (4) no response

14. Teacher Education (29)

14.1 District A Teacher Comments

- Not much, but it did prepare me to be flexible and enquiring
- Who remembers!!
- It didn't because it was oriented towards teaching children as a "unit" rather than individuals.
- I had some experience in an open area situation, otherwise very little.
- Not at all.
- Not really, I have taught split grades, but this is different.
- To the same extent it prepared me to teach anyone.
- Not at all
- It taught me to work with individual abilities regardless of how students are grouped!

- Not at all
- Courses in early childhood education and courses in elementary education were very much a part of my course work.
- no response
- Not at all
- zero
- not at all
- Nothing has benefited me more than the practical experience. My teacher education program was only a small introduction.
- none
- Not at all! My 6 years experience in rural schools prepared me.
- It didn't except for giving training for all primary levels separately.
- Not within present context
- no response
- very well (Stranmillis College, Belfast, N. Ireland)
- not at all
- no response

14.2 District B Teacher's Comments

- Not much because practicum was in a straight grade.
- Not at all
- Too long ago to remember! Did discuss British Integrated Day etc.
- Center approach
- Everything was based on grades therefore age was never really a worry.
- Not a great deal. I have learned more just from experience in the classroom.
- no
- It was too long ago to remember.
- Early Childhood Education
- Not at all. The program wasn't in the works yet
- Too long ago! I can't remember.
- It really didn't, my own professional reading and experience was the key.
- It provided a good basis.
- Concern for individual growth, open ended questions / unit studies
- Nil
- My teacher training did not prepare me for "mixed-age classrooms". This is a fairly recent focus.
- hardly any
- no response
- no response
- close match

15. Ideal Teacher Qualities and Background (31)

15.1 District A Teacher Comments

- openess to try methods / keen observational skills / adaptive to changing clientele "true for all teachers"
- A teacher who allows children to begin at their own level, someone who creates an environment where children can risk without fear. Someone who doesn't want to control children. A Teacher who understands child development.
- Flexibility, sensitivity, energetic, some knowledge of alternate teaching techniques, some knowledge of child development.
- Energy, ability to keep organized on-the-fly; ability to track student progress and adjust teaching styles to benefit the students
- the same as any other teacher
- Lost of energy!!
- the same as any other teacher of primary children
- An understanding of developmentally appropriate curriculum and strategies.
- Empathy, humor, good communication skills, energy, open minded
- a lot of patience and understanding
- patience, understanding of the environment the children come from
- no response
- Good methods courses at college. Plenty of patience.
- only that hey love their jobs and children
- they should want to do it
- The teacher needs to be free from a mind-set which places children in slots according to the traditional graded model (this is difficult to lose) The teacher also needs to enjoy and to be committed to the philosophy.
- patience / accepting of individual differences and rates of learning / knowledge of child development and a desire to learn and work hard.
- No family life, No commitments on weekends, Experience in a rural school
-Experience with teaching different age groups
- great experience of all levels, great energy and enthusiasm for the concept
- A true caring attitude towards children, some knowledge of child development; great discipline, always a cheerful attitude
- Have had children of [her] own, specialized in an early primary degree program, be sensitive to the needs of young children
- love of children, good listener, patience, a clear idea or understanding of where child is in his/her learning continuity and where he/she needs to be approximately at the end of that year and at the end of the 1st four years of primary
- be open to new ideas and adaptable

15.2 District B Teacher Comments

- Same as same-age! Patience, love, knowledge of Primary Program philosophy, whole language
- Flexibility, organized, knowledge of learning styles, good verbal skills to explain program to parents
- I think you need to have taught a variety of age groups before attempting a mixed-age class. You need good organizational skills and an ability to work cooperatively with colleagues.
- should want to do it, lots of energy and enthusiasm
- Love of kids and learning, faith that kids can learn
- patience, warmth, caring, calm, love of nature, general background knowledge, love of children, willingness to risk/try new things
- Patience, empathy, knowledge of different learning styles
- Liberal Arts Education/Practicum in multi-age
- Ideally, it would be best to have taught all the Primary grades (cooperative learning, thinking skills) separately first so that you would have a benchmark of standards and expectations at each level.
- Experience at all the grade levels she/he is teaching, flexible spirit
- flexibility, / love of children / knowledge of child development / good sense of humor / good P.R. / openness / curriculum knowledge, plus Year 2000 knowledge
- love of children, respect of differences, knowledge of child development and curriculum, humor, joy
- The same as for any other position, a care and concern for each individual child, combined with the ability to provide sound educational experiences.
- like children, accept individuality as a norm, therefore progress seen as culmination of personal traits within each child
- flexibility, sound knowledge of development of primary children / a holistic belief and attitude
- He/she needs to buy into mixed-age classes. It should not be imposed without input from teachers and time to plan and implement these plans.
- Primary degree with minor in Kindergarten, cooperative learning courses taken
- flexibility, patience
- knowledge of the 2000 document
- flexibility, organization, patience, love of learning, love of children

16. Three School or District Intitiatives (12)

16.1 District A Teacher Comments

- Inservice, school visitations - I saw it working in Victoria, sharing experiences
- small class sizes; support teachers (ie special needs and behavior problems); time and education for parents, administration and co-workers acceptance that this teaching style is not for everyone

- Does help mean convince? Hearing of supportive teacher-parent-student experiences; lower class size; give me way more books/supplies
- Lots of manipulatives; alternate math programs - lots of blackline masters to allow lots of levels to be taught at the same time; sharing experiences - good strategies how to problem solve the problems that arise
- lower class size for mixed-age (I think that's the key); more sharing of experiences among teachers of mixed-age; more materials for centers in ALL classrooms
- more inservice; more visitations to schools where implemented (out of district); visiting colleagues in own school or district who are doing it
- some direction from the upper ranks instead of classroom teachers doing everything
- time for planning with other teachers or visiting their classes; money for setting up classes with special learning centers; district helping teacher on a long-term basis
- more Pro D on the subject; coordination of programs at the various school levels; more classroom resources
- a commitment at district level to the concept; at stated support of the idea at district level; information to parents (or workshops) to assuage their fears
- Pro D to help teachers understand the philosophy and to learn ways to accommodate the diversity in their classrooms; visitations to other classes/schools; support group for teachers, ie sharing of information/ideas/strategies
- more funding for classroom supplies/equipment (ie center material); classroom visits; Pro D or inservices specific to mixed-age grouping
- teachers make decisions; more funding for multi-age; Pro D
- teacher make the decision to change; funding from district for books etc.; inservic-teachers making decisions, more funding, specific courses geared to mixed-age grouping
- no response
- low class size; money for resources/reading materials; teacher training sessions
- leadership from Administrative Officers - let's do it; substitute time to see how other classrooms work in the district; we do have Year 2000 implementation days (but only 1 per year)
- more time available for co-operative planning; more allowance given for teacher compatibility, smaller classes
- visiting percieved successful programs (on going); commitment to small classes with help when needed; adequate support services - Speech and Language/Special Needs Programs- Helping Teacher for 3 year term
- Having a Primary Supervisor or Helper is very necessary; having a teacher/librarian at the Resource Center; supervisors that are up to date on all new programs and or materials

- inservice; encoragement from district administrators; PRIMARY CONSULTANT TO ENCOURAGE TEACHERS as they embark on new programs
- more funding for implementation; more support in the first years of implementation; smaller class sizes (20 max.)
- inservice; helping teacher, observation

16.2 District B Teacher Comments

- no response
- help in establishing individual programs so that we don't just look at our classes as a split grade; Help in how to physically set up the classroom and keep records; Release time to go and observe within the school another teacher or teachers who have mixed-age grouping
- ?
- lower class size; money for staff-development in this area; money for classroom equipment and materials for a wider range of needs
- referring to students by age levels; continuity throughout the district; parent and grandparent education that there are no more "grades"!
- Buying into the philosophy and supporting teachers through their change process; providing money for resources; offering workshops that compliment the philosophy
- smaller classes; more prep time; inservice
- classroom visitations to see teachers who have experience with mixed-age grouping; helping teachers; a district primary coordinators to coordinate workshops, make us aware of what's happening in other schools, inform us of new publications etc.
- proof that it is (has) work - already in place like England they are reverting back to testing Why?
- Helping teachers; sharing sessions; money to buy lots of material for various learning abilities and for workshops
- time to observe others who have implemented this program; time for planning and collaboration with other teachers; money for professional development
- visitors days - one teacher free to visit all classes; sharing sessions on Thurs. to discuss all aspects as needed; teaming with other teachers
- Budget for increased resources and furniture - especially P1/P2; Some one on staff with a flexible time schedule and an eclectic philosophy toward teaching to help with planning and implementing programs for large groups and individuals
- visiting mixed-age classes; teaming with teachers currently in mixed-age classes; Pro D
- Visitations to classrooms; discussions with classroom teacher; :Flight Into Literature" type courses with Brownlie, Close and Wingren.
- time; inservice; respect for where teachers are at professionally
- multiage group organization and planning; theme development; assessment models

- no response
- inservice; observations in other schools; models
- inservice; university courses; observation in other schools

17. Mixed-age Class Set-up

17.1 District A Teacher Comments

- mix of ability range; even distribution of same-age groups; even boy/girl mix; parent preference; to some extent what child would benefit from mixed-age group
- In year two they become the older group and younger ones are added.
- Randomly in some cases and for some children who have been involved in the program they are put into similar grouping for at least 2 years.
- same way as other classes
- usually randomly with consideration given to social development and responsibility, emotional development, intellectual development, work habits, special needs
- Parental request or approval was used. the request system ended up loading some classes with off balanced dynamics (all leaders and mouth pieces in one case)
- Before it was "independent workers" - now it's supposed to be "balanced" like any other class
- There is a 'somewhat' commitment to keep children in a mixed-age setting once they begin a mixed-age setting.
- Originally more independent workers were chosen, now classes are more evenly balanced
- balance of: age, sex, compatibility, academic level
- age, sex, compatibility, special needs considerations
- according to age, sex, known behavior problems are distributed evenly
- Equal balance of ages, behavior types and academic ability and gender
- Equal numbers using equals of behavior types, academic ability and age and gender
- behavior - academic (equal) groups and age (balanced equally) plus gender equity
- no response
- by age and class enrollment
- by age
- Our school is so small - so younger students are assigned a classroom, middle aged students another and older assigned the remaining classroom
- student needs ie level of achievement, social interactions, special needs students, teacher preference of level/age and problems to be dealt with
- Behavior mainly; special needs and numbers
- The students are selected by personalities, abilities, and behavior characteristics

- Primary and intermediate teachers select a core of previous year students then children are grouped according to how they work/get along with each other, usually a heterogeneous group
- groups that would work well together

17.2 District B Teacher Comments

- It is quite the process! We just did it and it is a bit of a nightmare. First of all we keep some of our kids, then we try to keep everyone with a friend. And have a range of kids, from those who need a lot of teacher time to those who don't need a lot of teacher time. It's horrendous.
- Primary staff make up lists for basis
- We try to keep friends together and those who work well together. We also separate those who do not work well together. We try to make each classroom a mixture of boys and girls, abilities and interests.
- no response
- a balance is sought - ages, sex, behavior, friends, teacher time required, learning styles
- We use a coding system which refers to amount of teacher time required by a student and boys/girls even numbers. We try to balance a variety of abilities and behaviors and parent demands.
- Children are selected based on friendships, personal rapport between teacher and student, mixture of boys and girls and range of time each needs from teacher eg. some very independent, some so/so, some that are very time consuming.
- ?
- We try to put the student with at least one friend, look at how "needy' a particular student is of teacher's time and weight that, also social and intellectual reasons.
- Heterogeneous, even mix boys/girls and age.
- We try to have an equal number of P2/P3 otherwise heterogeneous groupings
- discussion between teachers
- socially and academically compatible groups
- keeping together P1 classes when possible with "concern" students placed in alternate classes to ensure maximum process socially, intellectually and/or aesthetically
- according to student needs and learning styles to match teachers teaching styles and personalities
- We look at friendships; ratio of male/female; learning and behavior problems and student and teacher rapport.
- N/A
- Distribution of ages and special needs; friendships
- according to needs and suitability
- Equitable distribution of ages and special needs children

APPENDIX F: ANECDOTAL COMMENTS FROM PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What Group Benefits from Mixed-age and Why (2)*

1.1 District A Comments

- younger; More apt to be drawn into what the older group is doing
- younger; They are challenged by the older children.
- younger; Role models of older children - listen to older group-younger; no response
- younger; The younger child can learn from an older child but the older child can lack stimulation
- younger; They get to interact more with older children.
- younger; More apt to be drawn into what the older group is doing.
- both; If the concept of continuous learning is used in the classroom both groups of students benefit equally.
- both; They learn from each other.
- both; no response
- both; mentoring and the knowledgeable being helpers
- both; no response
- both; It help the younger ones interact with the older and vice versa.
- both; Younger ones learn from older children.
- both; because they gain experience from the older children and then they in turn can help others
- both; older group can help younger group and younger group exposed to more.
- both; older children benefit from helping the younger and the younger children tend to want to do better to "keep up" with the older children
- both; dual entry student
- neither; I feel they're more comfortable with their own age group

1.2 District B Comments

- younger; no response
- younger; Older children help younger ones.
- younger; I think this setting provides extra stimulation for the younger ones because of want to be like the older ones and simply being exposed to a higher level of learning

* The number in the parenthesis corresponds to the question on the parent questionnaire.

** The spelling in the parents comments has been corrected, however the syntax has not been changed.

- younger, no response
- younger; They may learn from watching/listening to older children if they are able to learn this way.
- younger; because they get to progress faster than others younger; learn to get along with older children younger; more exposure to more advanced educational demands younger; no response
- both; _____ has one older brother it gave her the opportunity to integrate with younger children
- both; A more "natural" environment where they can learn from each other
- both; older help younger if you're a slow learner having younger ones may make it easier for you
- both; no response
- both; The brighter children can learn more and the slower children don't feel as much pressure
- both; The older ones learn to help and feel good about their abilities etc. while the younger ones benefit from the experience of the older ones.
- both; no response
- both; easier to help children progress at their level
- both; Younger have older as role models and helpers, older have opportunity to reinforce skills through helping
- older; I feel the younger children need to be by themselves particularily the K-1 years.
- neither; Age different (span 5.5-8)
- neither; I don't believe in split classes.
- neither; I feel it "stretches" the teacher's skills too far and does not benefit the children.

2. What Groups are Disadvantaged in Mixed-age and Why (3)

2.1 <u>District A Parent Comments</u>

- younger; Depending on child, they may feel inadequate in some areas
- younger; no response
- younger; Older children may be a problem for younger children
- younger; Older group instruction is beyond younger groups understanding
- older; Spend more time caring for younger child
- older; Their progress may be slowed down by younger children
- older; no response
- older; They spend too much time tutoring young children, again not enough stimulation
- older; They could be held back.
- neither; If the teacher is effective, neither group is at a disadvantage.
- neither; no response
- neither; If the concept of continuous learning is used in the classroom both groups of students benefit equally.

- neither; As long as there is a suitable amount of teaching assistance.
- neither; no response
- neither; no response
- neither; If the teacher is effective, neither group is at a disadvantage
- neither; Both groups are able to socialize, build friendship and learn from both groups.
- neither; because they get to mix with a greater variety of children
- both; It depends on the child's personality, etc. or how well they will work in this situation.

2.2 District B Parent Comments

- younger; too high expectations
- older; no response
- older; younger children would hold them back
- older; may be held back academically
- older; They all work mostly together and at the same level
- older; no response
- older; Much more time has to be spent with younger in order for them to do tasks without help.
- older; lack of attention span in younger children, when older children take learning seriously this can be frustrating
- older; older children help younger ones
- neither; I don't believe in split classes.
- neither; no response
- neither; no response
- neither; They can still learn at their own pace.
- neither; The brighter children can learn more and the slower children don't feel so much pressure.
- neither; no response
- neither; A more "natural" environment where they can learn from each other.
- neither; no response
- both; The "slower" kids in each level may not get the attention they need and the "quicker" ones may get "bored".
- both;Either group not smart enough or too smart towards the other younger kids attitude wise.
- both; Demands on teacher can be great seeing as ages require different approaches etc. Older may be used as role models too much or left on own too much.
- both; no response
- no response; If older or advanced aren't challenged enough

3. Older Children as Role Models (7)

3.1 District A Parent Comments

- no; A one year age difference at the primary level does not make a large difference except where the K-1 grouping is concerned. The grade ones could be great role models as far as knowing the appropriate classroom behavior and helping the K's settle in.
- no; Some older children could try to order younger children around.
- no; A one year difference in age does not make a large difference, however in the K-1 organization, the grade ones would be good role models in that they already know the appropriate classroom behavior.
- yes; at least they should be
- yes; These kids along with the teacher's philosophy help set the pulse and flavor of the classroom atmosphere.
- yes; mentoring and the knowledgeable being helpers
- yes; Most of the time, although when the "older kids" behavior is inappropriate, the younger kids could learn this as well, which isn't "good".
- yes; I feel it gives the older children more responsibility and a sense of accomplishment to help the younger children.
- yes; Situation where the older children can act as peer helpers is very beneficial to both parties.
- yes; no response
- yes; no response
- yes; Can assist younger children. Would not like to see Years 1-2-3 mixed in with Year 4-5, too much of a difference academically, maturity, etc.
- yes; Older children behave better when responsible for younger students. Have less need to perform for their age peers.
- yes; But only if the child is a good role model. I believe that not all are good role models.
- yes; no response
- yes; This system works for the younger child but falls severely short for grade 4.
- yes; no response
- yes; But it depends on each individual child, not all are suited to this.
- no response; I have mixed feeling for this question older good kids / Bad kids being a model can change a child from good to bad and vice versa.

3.2 District B Parent Comments

- no; My child cried many time in the 1/2 year started, Due to the older kids attitude when she was grade one, now she grade two, I found the role reversed, she became the bully because of the way she was treated in grade one.
- no; no response

- no; Have you ever seen the older ones play with the younger ones on a playground / at home after school etc.?
- yes; no response
- yes; They act as 'care pairs' with the younger children, and because most are advanced in their learning abilities, tend to help the younger with problems. Sometimes, the older children tend to act up a bit more in the classroom, which can be a bit of a disadvantage
- yes; no response
- yes; no response
- yes; no response
- yes; But my child complains how he can't work on his own because he has to help the younger children in his group.
- yes; no response
- yes; no response
- yes; no response
- yes; Can show a level of "maturity"; can help tutor the younger ones and benefit themselves through articulation and reinforcement as well as "giving" or helping another person.
- yes; no response
- yes; I guess in some ways it would provide a "pattern" for the younger ones - but then all children are not good role models!
- yes; no response
- yes; As long as they're well behaved etc.
- no response; Sometimes - depends upon social make up of children.
- no response; both, there can be positive and negative aspects going both ways
- no response; Depends on the children. These certainly is potential for them to be if the class is effectively managed.
- no response; Sometimes - depends on the age - mix of kids
- no response

4. Keeping Students For More Than One Year (8)

4.1 District A Parent Comments

- agree; They continue to grow in a consistent learning environment
- agree; Only if the relationship between the two is a positive one
- agree; Teachers know each child's strengths, weaknesses, quirks, etc. No need to spend Sept. getting to know each other
- aree; some students benefit from the continuity
- agree; The child becomes used to the teachers style and methods of teaching. They feel comfortable and if the child has a good teacher, as mine does it makes learning a wonderful experience.
- agree; It's good for kids who don't adapt to changes very well. It gives them a chance to gain some self confidence.

- agree; If a teacher has some of the same children for more than one year I believe it might free up some of his/her time to spend more one to one time with the children. Having already had some of the children previously they then know their capabilities and habits and don't have to spend their first 6-8 weeks of the new school year learning about them again.
- agree; Generally I agree - but if a child doesn't respond to that teacher's teaching method, or if a personality clash exists between the teacher and student, then the child should switch classes.
- agree; I would personally like them to continue as long as possible (except where personalities clash) continuity, consistency, and caring. Even time to time after leaving their classes.
- agree; Provides continuity for the child's learning and social environment.
- agree; Depends on the teacher, but our child benefited emotionally and academically.
- agree; Saves valuable teaching time as the teacher already knows the student.
- agree; Saves valuable teaching time as the teacher already knows the student.
- disagree; No I don't as some children are not happy with the teacher they have. (But don't get me wrong some are happy).
- disagree; no response
- disagree; My child experienced 2 years with the same teacher. I do not feel there was a benefit - in fact it was the opposite. A new year and a new teacher can bring fresh ideas and new ways of teaching for success.
- no response; In a way I do but in some way I don't.
- no response; If the child is ready why? Keep the child from stopping for success
- no response; It all depends on the teacher. Some teachers do not seem to do well in a mixed-age class - this can be to the child's disadvantage.

4.2 District B Parent Comments

- agree; The teacher knows the child better and knows the child's capabilities.
- agree; If the child / teacher relationship is positive it helps the teacher have a starting advantage the 2nd year. She/he knows where the child is at.
- agree; Can be good if it has been a good year for the student. Teacher will know the students well and what they're capable of.
- agree; Learning becomes a familiar activity with people that have developed a bond of trust. This would make the school environment comfortable.
- agree; At the top primary (P4 to Intermediate) level or beginning (K to full day program) some children do need extra time to develop the emotional (tied to) intellectual skills necessary to make the successful progress they deserve.
- agree; Teacher already knows you child's strength and weakness, personality etc.
- agree; no response

- agree; I a child is "achieving then the child would benefit from a teacher knowing where the child is "at". However if there are "personality" conflicts then the child may not get a chance with a different teacher which could make a difference.
- agree; Teacher knows child so there is no awkward period at beginning of year. Teacher already knows child's weak points.
- agree; The teacher is familiar with student needs. It works well with competent, understanding teachers only. In other cases of bias and prejudice it is best to get a different teacher.
- agree; It was a benefit for my child. She already knew his strengths and weaknesses. He like her as well which was an advantage.
- agree; The teacher can automatically continue the following year knowing the child's work and positive areas of development.
- agree; The children know the teacher therefore feel more comfortable with the overall classroom.
- agree; Especially when the student is comfortable and growing with current teacher.
- agree; Students and teachers get to know each other - their strengths and weaknesses, so they don't have that 2 month intro the following year. Students feel very comfortable going into a classroom situation that they have been in the previous year.
- agree; From the teacher's point of view - they don't have to get to know the child, know their strengths and weaknesses etc. From the kids - miss on having another adult teach them a different way, expose them to the teacher's different strengths etc.
- agree; Not everybody can keep pace with everyone. Some don't develop fast. You push them [threw] they'll suffer when older.
- disagree; I think this might be a good idea for K, gr.1, gr.2 level, but when children are much older and they start with personality conflicts etc. I think sometimes a new teacher is like a fresh start.
- agree/disagree; It depends on the teacher.
- disagree; no response
- disagree; The advantage seems to be the TEACHERS.

5. Three Important Benefits for Children (9)

5.1 <u>District A Parent Comments</u>

- They learn from older children; They can help each other; Learning to interact with a variety of peers.
- Peer tutoring; Role modeling (if positive); Breakdown of age group barriers ie: fourth graders thinking they are the kings/queens!
- more opportunities for working at own personal level; Role models by older students; Listens to better readers, writers, etc.

- Exposure to future years academics; Role models both for younger and older students; More of "family" learning environment rather than ego trips because in Year 4 classroom etc.
- Being comfortable socializing with older and younger children; role models
- social relationships; opportunity to move ahead at their own rate; removal of some of the competitive aspects of single age classrooms
- social and emotional development; learning role models; more challenging environment
- The older children can rise to the responsibility of being the role models for the younger children; The older children usually feel a sense of pride and accomplishment from helping younger children, not only academically, but socially as well; Older students that are "struggling" with school work don't feel "at the bottom" of the class so are more likely to learn at their own rate.
- working with peers; helping others; cooperation, social skills, getting along with others
- Learning to work together in a cooperative way; Role model exposure for the younger children; continuity academically, socially, emotionally
- no response
- We're not sure there are any as our children have done equally well in both mixed-age and single grade classrooms.
- none; none; none
- We're not sure there are nay as our children have done equally well in both mixed-age and single grade classrooms.
- Only benefit is reinforcement of what is learned by having to reteach it to a younger child.
- If they are with older children they would learn faster.
- social and school work attitude adjustments; self-respectin progression and studies; mature examples for study habits
- advantage learning different children; advantage helping younger children; friendship (relationship)
- working well with older/younger children; encouragement to work to full potential - can go on in subjects eg. Year students using Year 5 texts; Learning responsibility

5.2 District B Parent Comments

- higher level of thinking/behavior; modeling if child is interested
- no response
- good role models; likes older children and relates well to them; experience materials a grade ahead and taking some of that in
- more than one year with a class and teacher; Interaction with older children and more advanced abilities; Able to learn at own pace
- Choice of activity level - re-exposure if originally weak; Friendships with more than one age group, enrichment at lower level; Peer tutoring concept, although this can happen in a single age class

- greater range in skills; helping younger/learning from older; getting along with various ages
- integration with children of other ages; being a role model for younger children
- social/emotional development older child "helps" younger child while reviewing himself
- Reinforcement of skills and knowledge; Social learning or learning social skills; Understands/ learns that everyone is at a different level depending upon exposure to information and readiness
- social; academic
- social skills, eg. cooperation between different age groups etc.; lack of pressure, not feeling "left behind"; the opportunity to advance
- socially
- social development; older children are role models; If ready to advance has the opportunity to do so in a mixed-age class especially if the child is younger
- Older children can feel success - good self concept; Older children are good role models; Young children can always be challenged
- The ability to interact with older children; They get to see what the other children do; They learn from the older children.
- Learning to deal with different levels of maturity; helping and cooperation; tolerance and patience
- more one on one teaching
- All I can say is she got to know more kids; Besides her reading level I saw no change from was she took in grade one from two.
- None
- no response
- social/emotional

6. Concerns for Children in Mixed-age (10)

6.1 <u>District A Parent Comments</u>

- no
- is she being challenged enough, can the teachers "spread" themselves enough to accommodate the different levels, is it too competitive
- I would rather my child be the younger student
- Too much older group instruction, younger children may not understand certain concepts
- That she never feels inadequate with older children
- no
- Only concern is that if the teacher is not a believer in the concept and committed to the idea then the children would suffer more than a regular grade class
- I believe that the teacher of a mixed-age class expends more energy than in a "traditional straight" class. When the teacher believes in the system and

puts forth the extra energy then it usually is great, but if the teacher finds the mixed-age too much of a burden, then I think the children could loose out. I have to say that I haven't found this to be a problem so far and I have had 4 children with the last three years in mixed-age classes; I just think this could be a possibility
- no, as long as there is enough quality assistance /supervision
- That the class is taught as a multi-age model not a split class.
- no
- We're not sure there are any
- yes
- We're not sure there are any
- as mention previously, very little stimulation
- the only concern I have is if the child is being taught the things she is supposed to for her age and year she's in.
- no
- no response
- Children with quiet or withdrawn personalities can get lost in the shuffle. Out going children seem to do better.

6.2 District B Parent Comments

- no response
- There may be unrealistic expectations for the younger group when an older group is working along side them.
- It takes a skilled teacher to teach a mixed-age class and I would hope proper training has taken place. This year has been a great experience for my child.
- no
- no
- I would not like to see him always in one, especially if it meant he was always the "older group.
- no response
- Yes I have already stated them.
- The older child will only make friends with younger children so there is an advantage of being leader. The child will have a chance to go from older to younger in one year then the opposite for the next year.
- no
- no
- none
- none
- I would much prefer my child to be in one grade class because the child would want to try to keep up to other children of his own age and the teaching concept would concentrate on one certain level.
- Some, It's a new concept. I still prefer the old definition of grades
- Yes and No! Yes if my child happens to be with majority of children at a much slower level of learning, ie. "young" 6 year olds! Yes if the child is the older

- younger benefits. No, if the children are relatively equal in abilities.
- I wish kindergarten was still kept separate. They have enough to deal with just learning the social end. Then join grade 1 and 2 in one level, and grade 3 and 4 in another.
- TONS! A teacher can only spread herself so far and therefore the time is too little with each individual. The social aspect! Kids tend to group naturally with those who are closest in age. If out of a class of 26, thirteen are P2 and 13 are P3 and of those 13 seven are girls and 6 are boys then if your daughter is one of the 7 she has far fewer girls to choose to play with than if it was a straight P2 class.
- I hope she never has it again. I hope it's back to basic grades of ABC's before my younger child start school.
- Yes. If a child is a Primary 1 and 2 how can the teacher give your child the full knowledge.
- no response
- yes, at this age group I don't believe it has any benefit except for the teacher and that's not what concerns me.

7. Continuing in Mixed-age Classrooms (12)

7.1 District A Parent Comments

- yes, no response
- yes, if she was in a class that had older children (ie 2-3). I believe the benefits are good and outweigh the negative. I have a child who enjoys school and I would like to see her challenged rather than being bored and I feel older children in her class could be a benefit.
- My child has excelled in this environment.
- yes, Only if year 4-5 are not mixed with Year 1-2-3. Too much of a difference in interests, maturity, self-confidence, etc.
- yes, The more you experience, the more you know.
- yes, because I think it's been a valuable learning experience for him.
- yes, It is our experience already, that our child has nothing but benefited from this concept. Once again the teacher makes a difference, also if this going to work or not.
- yes, My opinion is that when the teacher understands the "philosophy" of mixed-age classes (Year 2000) then it is superior to the "older", traditional method of teaching.
- yes, I believe it is the way to go with todays children.
- yes, Excellent learning environment!
- yes, no problems so far.
- no, The older child in the multi-age grouping may not have the same opportunity as the younger child for working ahead.
- no, I believe that parents should be informed of mixed ages classes, for as I was never notified and didn't realize, my child was in such a class until this

notice. I feel that younger children would feel inferior to older children because of there less advanced school work.
- no, The older child in the multi age grouping may not have the same opportunity as the younger child for working ahead.
- no, We moved away from the "little" school and multi-grade classes because they could not provide the concentrated learning and teaching needed for success in the world. Change is good but why move backwards just for the sake of change? Can you REALLY define a goal - Do you know where you are going?
- no response, That would depend on what she is learning. If she is not learning for her grade I would not choice it.
- yes, but would prefer a mixed grade 2-3 for example from older students, or just straight grade 2 to ensure and encourage growth.
- yes. no response
- yes, no response

7.2 District B Parent Comments

- no, no response
- no response, He will be in grade 2 in Sept. he will be older, there may not be as high expectations on him.
- yes, no response
- yes, I believe the results shown in children's development are proof that it works very well.
- yes, Doesn't matter either way.
- no, Because he was in a P2-3 this year. I wouldn't want him in a P3-4 where he would once again be the "older" group
- yes, no response
- no, I myself was in a mixed-age/grade class in elementary school and personally didn't care for it (grade 6/7). We were all "honor" students but the teacher had a hard time challenging us equally. I don't feel it's fair to most teachers and I think that the kids do not benefit in the important basic learning areas.
- yes/no, It is still very early to determine anything. My child is the older in her class. I'd be interested to see what would happen if it was the other way around. Then I would have a better basis to form an opinion.
- yes, _____ Elementary is lucky to have dedicated teachers who encourage each child and help to develop the areas of need. Mixed aged groups can be a positive experience, if the teachers are competent...this is also true, however of any classroom experience.
- yes, no response
- yes, My son benefited greatly!
- yes, My son is a December born child, so I feel he socially can mix with both age groups.

- no, I would much prefer my child to be in one grade class because the child would want to try to keep up to other children of his own age and the teaching concept would concentrate on one certain level.
- no, I think it makes the teachers job even harder to accommodate such diverse groups. I would prefer single grade groupings with the opportunity for mixed age groups to get together as required.
- yes, The younger child learns from the older. In my particular situation, my daughter is level 2 and because of the mixed-age class she has just grown so much this past year in mainly academic standing because she has decided to keep up with the level 3 children. She is reading chapter books and has been doing so since early January. She has the capabilities, but I think being with older children, they tend to set their own goals just much higher.
- yes, I think in general this is a good idea, but it needs some work, and more studies like this done, so some areas could be improved.
- no, This the 3rd child in a split class. I really feel strongly about the lack of playmates available from the classroom "pool" of kids. I have seen absolutely no sign of "leadership" skills from the older kids of the split. A teacher can go ahead or back with a more homogeneous group of kids than with such a spread of abilities.
- no, My daughter is strong, but my younger one will never emotional and social development will fall into the cracks of finding it hard to cope. I hope it goes back to normal. I really don't see any advantages to the schools being this way.
- no, no response
- no, no response
- no, I believe children should be equiped with the learning skills before being ask to become part of the teaching-staff.